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Government

# Education and Lifelong Learning

## Evaluation of The Scottish Government Children's Services Women's Aid Fund Main Report

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## **1. THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CHILDREN'S SERVICES WOMEN'S AID FUND: POLICY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Scottish Government Children's Services Women's Aid Fund in its first year of operation (1st April 2006 – 31st March 2007). It is based on an analysis of the 43 Children's Services who received funding under the scheme.

### **Policy background**

1.2 Policy developments relevant to the setting up of the Scottish Government Children's Services Women's Aid Fund can be traced back to the beginnings of devolution in Scotland, where Scotland's significant problem in relation to domestic abuse was recognised and prioritised through the Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse resulting in the National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland. Specific problems faced by children in this situation were also recognised:

*'All women and children who experience abuse must receive support and services to enable them to identify their needs, to make choices and to have these needs addressed, as well as to participate in developing services to address their needs in the future. It should be recognised that children require services which meet their specific needs' (Scottish Executive 2000:7).*

1.3 The strategy recommended urgent action to develop a clear understanding of the needs of children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. Since then, this has been emphasised across a number of government reports, guidance and forums.

1.4 The Audit and Review of Child Protection (Scottish Executive 2002) recommended that children in this situation be regarded as 'in need' under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. It highlighted that a more comprehensive and unified approach to meeting the needs of young people experiencing domestic abuse was required (Scottish Executive 2002).

1.5 A mapping exercise was also conducted into the provision of services to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse (Stafford 2004). This highlighted gaps in service provision to this group of children; concluding that services were unevenly spread in a way not apparently related to need or population density; delivered in a way that seemed ad hoc, uncertain and uncertainly funded. It highlighted a particular lack of service to young people who had experienced domestic abuse but where there had been no contact with a Women's Aid refuge; also in the provision of direct, therapeutic specialist services to young people experiencing domestic abuse. It emphasised the need for a sustainable and coherent funding base for these services (Stafford 2004).

1.6 Scottish Executive guidance was issued to local authority children's services planners in 2004 to ensure the needs of young people experiencing domestic abuse were incorporated into key local planning documents and effective support for this group. It specifically asked planners to develop a strategic, integrated approach to providing the range of services to address their therapeutic, practical and support needs; to consider the requirement for

increased specialist services, and improve and integrate the response of all agencies to increase partnership working and good practice in relation to this.

1.7 The Scottish Executive invested £6m (£3m in year 1, £3m in year 2) for specialist workers to offer direct support to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. It was to be in addition to the approximately £1.5m per year allocated by Local Authorities to these services. A total of 43 projects were funded through the Scottish Executive Children's Services Women's Aid Fund, to enable each Children's Service in Scotland to have a minimum of 3 full-time workers to offer; support in the Refuge(R); Refuge and Follow-on (RFO) and Outreach work (OR).

1.8 Each of these Children's Services exists within an individual autonomous organisation. Most of these organisations are Women's Aid Groups. Many of these Women's Aid groups are affiliated to Scottish Women's Aid and receive support and services from them, others are not. Irrespective of their affiliation status, there is great variation between how the different services operate and the procedures they adopt. It cannot be assumed therefore that practice which exists in one service is replicated in all or indeed any of the other services.

1.9 During the course of the evaluation, the Scottish Government provided a second tranche of funding.

1.10 In addition, as part of the 'Getting it right for every child' proposals, the Scottish Executive announced the Getting it right for every child Domestic Abuse Pathfinder projects. Their purpose was to establish and pilot new ways of agencies working together to provide better support and intervention for children affected by domestic abuse. The pilot projects in four local authority areas are now operational. The National Domestic Abuse Delivery Group (NDADG) was set up and is responsible for monitoring the pilots. Another role of the NDADG was to develop and implement a three year National Strategic Delivery Plan to address the needs of children and young people affected by domestic abuse. The Delivery Plan was published in June 2008 (Scottish Government, 2008). It sets out 13 Priorities for Action which have been resourced and will be progressed over three years.

1.11 The Fund was made available for the direct support of children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. In setting up the Fund the then Scottish Executive set out the following conditions:

- This Fund will focus on working with local children's services planning partners to enhance Women's Aid direct specialist support for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. It works towards ensuring there is a minimum level of high quality service throughout Scotland, based on good practice recommendations
- The Fund will enhance and not replace current and planned expenditure on the Women's Aid children's service, therefore allocation of grant presumes the level of local authority funding will continue
- The Fund will be allocated on the basis of support for each Women's Aid Group to reach the recommended two full time workers (or equivalent) to provide

refuge/follow on services to children and young people, and one outreach worker to support children in the wider community experiencing domestic abuse

- Funding submissions were to reflect the National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse (Scottish Executive 2000) and take forward action contained in the Guidance for Planners: Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse (Scottish Executive, 2004).

1.12 The funding was also to support:

- The Executive's vision that children in Scotland be 'safe, nurtured, healthy, active, achieving, respected, responsible, included'
- Commitment to the Children's Charter that agencies should 'get to know us, listen to us, take us seriously, involve us, respect our privacy, be responsible to us, think about our lives as a whole, think carefully about how to use information about us, put us in touch with the right people, use your power to help, make things happen when they should, help us be safe'
- The Getting it right for every child criteria for success and HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) Quality Indicator Framework.

### **The aims of the Fund and the scope of the research**

1.13 The Fund had 5 specific aims and objectives:

- **Aim 1: Increase access of children and young people to Women's Aid services:-** With specific objectives to: increase the number of workers to the recommended level of 3 full-time staff (FTE) (2 Refuge/Refuge Follow-on Workers and 1 Outreach Worker) in each project; increase the number of dedicated hours each worker was able to spend with children and young people; increase the flexibility and range of hours services are provided; increase the number of children and young people experiencing domestic abuse accessing Refuge, Follow-on and Outreach support
- **Aim 2: Have a wide range of specialist support services to meet the diverse needs of children and young people experiencing domestic abuse:-** With specific objectives to provide: one to one support, a group-work service and to use a key worker approach. Projects were also asked to use holistic assessment, support plans and other tools, provide age appropriate and ability appropriate and diverse services, and provide opportunities to build social networks
- **Aim 3: Ensure services to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse meet recommended practice standards:-** With specific objectives to: ensure services are registered and inspected by the Care Commission; recruit workers with appropriate skills and knowledge; ensure staff are trained in line with SSSC requirements; take account of the protecting children framework for standards
- **Aim 4: Ensure children and young people experiencing domestic abuse inform service developments; have opportunities to participate in evaluation of services:-** With specific objectives to: seek children and young people's feedback; to involve children and young people in development of services



- **Aim 5: Work in partnership to ensure children and young people experiencing domestic abuse get the help they need when they need it:-** With specific objectives to: develop good working relationships with relevant agencies including information sharing protocols and advocating for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse in local planning networks.

1.14 The purpose of this research is to evaluate the 43 projects set up under the Fund in terms of the key aims listed above. The Report is structured around these five broad themes.

## **2. ETHICAL ISSUES**

2.1 The evaluation involved interviewing Women's Aid staff and a range of professional stakeholders. It also involved direct contact with children, young people and mothers with contact with Women's Aid. Mindful of their likely prior experience of domestic abuse, the research team gave careful consideration to ethical issues of power, safety, control, child protection, privacy, consent and confidentiality.

2.2 The research received Ethical Approval from the Ethics Committee of the Moray House School of Education at the University of Edinburgh. Members of the research team have enhanced disclosure certificates. The appropriate professional bodies were engaged and permissions obtained to access professionals for the stakeholder interviews e.g. the Association of Directors of Social Work and Association of Directors of Education.

### **Issues of power, safety and control**

2.3 Interviewing for research purposes always raises issues in relation to balance of power, safety and confidentiality and control; researchers need to be continually mindful of these. These issues are of particular significance for this particular group of young people and their mothers and the researchers were mindful of this at each stage of the research. Central to the research was the imperative that children and young people and their mothers would not be further damaged by the process of participating in the research. Participants were given full, clear, honest information at every stage in the process. They contributed to decisions about how, where and when to be interviewed; clear written materials were produced explaining this. Full and informed consent was obtained from mothers, children and young people at every stage of the research with messages given that the decision to participate belongs to them and can be ended at any point.

### **Child protection**

2.4 Mechanisms were put in place to deal with the possibility that interviews with young people and/or adult respondents could raise child protection issues. A named child protection specialist was attached to the research should issues have arisen. No issues arose.

### **Consent and confidentiality**

2.5 Consent was sought from and information given to the main parent/carer with whom the young person was living at the time of the research. Ground rules in relation to confidentiality were discussed and agreed with funders. Interviews were conducted on the basis that all young people participating in the research and adult respondents have the right to confidentiality, anonymity and privacy.

## **Data storage and security**

2.6 All electronic data was and is securely stored. Project files held on computer are password protected as an additional safeguard and stored on the University of Edinburgh's computer mainframe hard drive. Paper documents are stored in secure locked cabinets and only accessible to members of the research team. Data handling processes have not contravened the Data Protection Act (1998).

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Research design summary

3.1 The evaluation was extensive and detailed. Information was gathered from all 43 projects set up under the Fund. The major part of the evaluation was based on 15 case examples based in 10 sample projects. It also involved service effectiveness interviews with Women's Aid service co-ordinators and/or collective staff. Views of key stakeholders of the service as a whole were also sought. Information from 258 children was collected via the children's questionnaire. The research design is set out below:

- **Case studies** constituted the major part of the evaluation. Fifteen cases were selected from the 10 sample projects. Each case was reviewed; interviews were conducted with young people (where they were aged 10 and over), their main caregiver, key workers and other professional associated staff. This provided detailed information and understanding of the way individual children and families experienced the new services set up as result of the Fund (46 interviews)
- **Service effectiveness interviews** were conducted with the service managers/coordinators and/or collective members responsible for the Fund in each of the 10 sample projects. Interviews were based on indicators of service effectiveness derived from the overall aims of the Fund (10 interviews) (See Appendix 1)
- **Key stakeholder interviews** were conducted with key informants from the sample projects. These were to gather information about the overall effectiveness of the projects. These included interviews with: mothers, project staff, children's services planners, staff in partner organisations, including teachers, social workers and early years workers. Stakeholder information from young people was gathered using a questionnaire (see below) and as part of interviews conducted at the case study stage (17 individual interviews; 1 group interview – 7 mothers)
- **Young people's questionnaire.** 1081 questionnaires were issued to a range of young people receiving a service under the new Fund; 41 projects distributed the questionnaire. Responses were received from children from 38 projects; it included responses from boys and girls, from younger (8-10) and older children (10 – 16); from children currently in a refuge and those not. (258 returns)
- **Analysis of Reporting Templates.** Analysis of 43 reporting templates submitted to the then Scottish Executive covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

3.2 The table below summarises the contacts/interviews by method:

**Table 1: Contact/interview by method**

Interviewees	Service effectiveness interviews	Case studies	Stakeholder interviews	Questionnaire returns
Children and young people		14		258
Mothers		14	21	
Grandmothers		1		
Children's support workers		13		
Women's Aid co-ordinators/ managers	10			
Other professionals		4		
Total	10	46	21	258

Note: numbers represent number of interviews; some interviewees provided information as both case study respondents and as stakeholders.

3.3 Data from these sources was triangulated and used to assess the extent to which the Fund was meeting its stated aims. The aims of the Fund will be discussed in turn and the sources of data used to evidence this will be set out.

3.4 Sample projects were selected by the research team on the basis of pre- agreed criteria (below) and endorsed by the research advisory committee. All but one of the original selection of ten projects agreed to participate in the evaluation.

**Table 2: Criteria for selecting sample projects:**

A rural authority
An urban authority
An island authority
A small town
A city
Where there seems to have been particularly innovative use of funding
Different models of service delivery
Where there were young people from different ethnic backgrounds and/or with additional support needs
Where there are specialist services provided by local authority.

## Detail of methods

### *Service effectiveness interviews*

3.5 Interviews were conducted with 15 staff responsible for the Fund in the 10 sample projects<sup>1</sup> about service effectiveness. The interviews were based on selected indicators of quality derived from the stated core aims of the Fund (see Appendix 1). Interviews were

<sup>1</sup> 15 people were interviewed in respect of 10 projects – sometimes necessary information was held by more than one person.

with: service managers, co-ordinators and/or collective members. Interviews were face to face (8) and telephone (2)<sup>2</sup>.

### ***Case study examples in sample projects***

3.6 The 15 in-depth case studies in the sample projects were built around 15 children receiving a service under the Fund. This formed the major element of the evaluation and was key to our understanding of the way individual children and families experienced the new services set up as a result of the Fund. The case studies were designed to assess: the quality of the service they received; the views of young people about the effectiveness of the service; views of mothers, project workers and staff in partner organisations.

3.7 Cases were selected on the basis of age – we wanted to reflect the experiences of younger as well as older children, gender, a mix of boys and girls, and ethnicity. Where children were aged 10 or older, we interviewed them directly; where children were younger than 10, information about children was gathered from their mothers or main carers and project staff<sup>3</sup>. We did not conduct interviews face to face with children younger than 10 for a number of reasons. Previous experience suggests that interviewing a younger age group can make them feel awkward; parents may be less likely to consent to younger children being interviewed; interviewers may not be completely sure of fully informed consent and not completely sure of not causing further harm. The characteristics of the case children from the sample projects are set out in Appendix 1, Table 13.

3.8 Three of the case studies were selected from one sample project; two case studies each were selected from three of the projects; one case study was undertaken in each of the remaining six sample services. The case studies comprised:

- 14 face to face interviews with young people and siblings in relation to 11 cases
- 15 interviews with mothers/carers (the majority of which were undertaken face to face)
- 15 interviews with children's support workers (CSW) (most were undertaken face to face)
- Four telephone interviews with other professionals.

3.9 This is set out in the table below:

**Table 3: Case study interviews**

Case	Interviews	Total interviews
1.	Mum, CSW	2
2.	Young person, Mum, CSW	3
3.	Young person, Mum, CSW, other professional	4
4.	Young person, Gran, CSW	3

<sup>2</sup> In five of the services, the interview was with a co-ordinator who managed the whole service or in some cases the children's service. The other five services operated as a collective where staff are equally responsible for all aspects of the service. In two of these services the interview was undertaken with three children's workers; in a further two services the interview was undertaken with an individual children's worker; in the fifth service the interview was undertaken with a children's worker and an administrator.

<sup>3</sup> Information from under 10s was mainly gathered via the Questionnaire.

Case	Interviews	Total interviews
5.	2 young people, Mum, CSW	4
6.	2 young people, Mum, CSW, other professional x 2	6
7.	Mum, CSW, other professional	3
8.	Mum, CSW	2
9.	Young person, Mum, CSW	3
10.	Young person, Mum, CSW	3
11.	Mum, CSW	2
12.	Young person, Mum, CSW	3
13.	Young person, Mum, CSW	3
14.	2 young people, Mum, CSW	4
15.	Young person, Mum, CSW	3
Total	14 young people, 14 Mums, 1 Gran, 13 CSWs*, 4 other professionals	48

\* 13 CSWs were interviewed in respect of 15 cases – in 2 cases the CSW was the key worker for both cases.

### ***Young people's questionnaire***

3.10 The main method of gathering information about the experiences and views of children was through the use of a self-complete questionnaire delivered to children in each of the projects funded under the scheme. Two questionnaires were developed; one for use with children aged 5 – 9 years, the other for young people aged 10 – 16 years.

3.11 Previous studies by the authors highlighted the extent to which children, including those living with adversity, greatly value privacy and anonymity when being asked for their views and sharing information for research. Across a number of studies, young people have mentioned they value questionnaires because of the privacy afforded from peers, teachers and workers when providing information (Stafford 2003; Seaman et al 2004; Stafford et al, 2007).

3.12 The themes explored in the questionnaire included the nature and level of service; the delivery of service; practice standards; involvement of young people, views of future developments; views and experience of the service.

3.13 The questionnaire was distributed by children's support workers to young people receiving or who had previously received a service in all 43 projects. Staff provided estimates of numbers of young people available to complete a questionnaire. This was used as the population from which to calculate a broad response rate.

- 135 responses were received from the younger group - a response rate of 24%
- 151 completed questionnaires were returned from the older group of young people - a response rate of 29%
- In the younger group, of the 134 respondents who answered the question 63 (47%) were girls and 71 (53%) were boys
- In the older group, 91 (61.1%) of the 149 respondents were girls and 58 (38.9%) were boys

- Of the older group just over half had stayed in a refuge; 29 (19%) were currently staying in a refuge; 48 (35%) were not currently but had previously been in the refuge. 65 (47%) had never lived in a refuge
- Just over half (75) of the older group had their first contact with Women's Aid at least 7 months prior to completing the questionnaire; 42 (29%) of them had their first contact with Women's Aid over one year ago prior to completing the questionnaire. 48 (33%) of respondents had first been in contact with Women's Aid between one and six months previously. Seven young people (5%) had their first contact with Women's Aid one month or less prior to completing the questionnaire.

### ***Stakeholder interviews***

3.14 Information was also sought from key stakeholders associated with the projects and was designed to gather information about the working of the projects in general. Interviews were with children's support workers (10); mothers/carers (22), local authority workers including children's services planners (9); staff in partner organisations, including teachers, social workers, voluntary sector workers, early years workers, staff in other domestic abuse services (21). Stakeholder information from young people was collected as part of the case study interviews and from questionnaires. These are set out in the table below:

**Table 4: Stakeholder interviews**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>No of interviews</b>
Children's support workers	10
Mothers/carers	22
Local authority partners	9
Teachers/education	10
Social workers	4
Voluntary sector	2
Early years voluntary sector	1
Other	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

3.15 Some of these interviews were undertaken face to face, some by phone. Six of the eleven children's workers were outreach workers<sup>4</sup>; one worked with children in refuge and in outreach<sup>5</sup>; one worked only with children in refuge; three worked with children in refuge and follow-on. A stakeholder group with mothers was undertaken in one of the ten sample services. The women all had children who were under ten; most were below school age. Their children had had contact with the service for between seven months and one year.

<sup>4</sup> One of these children's workers is actually classified as a refuge and follow on worker but all her work is with children and young people who have never lived in refuge since the refuge has only one family space which was vacant; the outreach worker in this area only does group-work not one to one work

<sup>5</sup> Fifty per cent of the children's workers post is as a children's worker for Women's Aid where she works in the refuge; fifty per cent is for the Council where she works with children on an outreach basis.



## **FINDINGS**

### **AIM 1:- INCREASED ACCESS BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO WOMEN'S AID SERVICES**

#### **4. AIM 1:- ACCESS BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO WOMEN'S AID SERVICES**

##### **Introduction**

4.1 Findings for this section relate to the first stated aim of the Fund to increase young people's access to Women's Aid services; with the specific objectives to: increase the number of workers to the recommended level of 3 FTE (2 refuge/refuge follow-on workers and 1 outreach worker) in each project; increase the number of dedicated hours each worker is able to spend with children and young people; increase the flexibility and range of hours services are provided; increase the number of children and young people accessing refuge, follow-on and outreach support.

4.2 Evidence about the extent to which this aim has been achieved was collated from service effectiveness interviews, case study interviews with children's support workers, mothers, children and young people, from the children's questionnaire and stakeholder interviews with mothers and children's support workers.

##### **Staffing at recommended levels**

4.3 Information from a range of sources suggests the Fund has enabled all the projects to meet or nearly meet the target of having staff at the recommended level; i.e. three full time equivalent children's workers or more: two refuge/refuge follow-on workers, and one outreach worker.

4.4 Information from the reporting templates suggests that all projects but one, reported some increase in staffing. By the end of the reporting period, numbers of full time equivalent staff had risen from 65 reported in 2005/6 to 142 reported in 2006/7, an increase of 77 FTE CSW posts.

**Table 5: Number of children's support workers**

	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07 (end date yr 1)</b>	<b>Variance</b>
No of FTE Children's support worker posts	65	142	77

4.5 Only 11 of 43 projects reported they did not have 3 FTE staff, with 33 reporting they had 3 FTE or more children's support workers in post. A further eight projects had managed to recruit between two and 2.9 FTE children's support workers. In a few cases there has been no increase in staffing.

4.6 Some projects were able quickly to employ and deploy staff. However, a few reported delays in staff coming into post. Initial recruitment difficulties seem to have been ironed out by the end of the reporting period.

4.7 While most services did have staff at the recommended level and were deploying staff in the recommended way, there were some examples where this was being pursued differently. For example, one service had two full time refuge workers (one in each refuge) and an outreach worker but did not have a follow-on worker. One service employed four part time children's workers and a full time children's co-ordinator – with the same staff funded separately to work as women's workers for the other 50% of their time.

**Practice example:**

One service had three children's workers but the posts were not split into refuge, follow-on and outreach as they are in most other services. This was because there was only one family space in the refuge. Instead two of the workers covered all three roles: therapeutic work with children in refuge, follow-on and outreach; the third 'outreach' worker did mainly group-work. This appeared to work well and was an example of how a service had been flexible in organising staffing around the needs of service users and the skills of staff members and available resources.

4.8 While the Fund had enabled the recommended level of staffing to be reached for most of the projects, some interviewees in both Women's Aid and the local authority were concerned that inconsistency and the lack of continuity in funding could create potential problems in staffing levels in future.

**Summary and Recommendation: Staffing at recommended levels**

<i>Summary</i>	The Fund has enabled all or nearly all the reporting projects to meet or nearly meet the target of having 3 FTE children's support workers in each Women's Aid group: one refuge, one refuge/follow-on and one outreach worker. There was some evidence of projects using monies flexibly and innovatively to meet local need. Concern was expressed from a number of sources that continuing insecurity of funding could create problems in maintaining staffing levels in the future.
<i>Recommendation 1</i>	Timely action is needed between Scottish Government, Local Authorities and Women's Aid groups to plan for continuation of the service at the end of the current funding period

**Numbers of children and young people accessing refuge, follow-on and outreach services**

4.9 In this section we provide initial information about numbers of young people worked with and supported. Headline information is that there has been progress towards meeting this aim, with an increase in numbers of young people accessing the service in all categories. The detailed picture varies from project to project and by type of work. Local authority partners and other stakeholders are aware of and seem satisfied with service expansion. Reservations were raised by Women's Aid staff about using numbers of young people worked with as an indicator of service effectiveness and/or as a proxy for good outcomes for young people. To explore this further, we use data from the templates, information from the projects, local authority partners and other stakeholders.

## ***Counting young people***

4.10 Care needs to be taken with using data from the templates to report on numbers of young people accessing service<sup>6</sup>. We can say that there is a wide range of projects supporting a wide range of activity and services to children and young people; with projects varying in size and in relation to their local operating context. In 2005/6 there were around 1223 young people receiving support in refuges. By 2006/7 this had risen to 1647; an increase of 424 young people receiving support. For young people receiving support in refuges and receiving follow-on support, this was 338 young people in 2005/6, rising to 854 in 2006/7; an increase of 516. Data in relation to outreach support was inconsistently recorded between projects. Information from the projects suggests that the increase in the numbers of young people accessing an outreach service has been substantial.

**Table 6: Children and young people receiving support across all categories**

<b>Children and young people</b>	<b>2005/6</b>	<b>2006/7</b>	<b>Increase</b>
Nos receiving support in refuge (only)	1223	1647	424
Nos receiving support refuge and follow-on (only)	338	854	516
Nos receiving outreach service	Data poor	Data poor	Data poor
Total nos receiving support (refuge, refuge and follow-on)	1561	2501	940

4.11 Information from the templates and from the field data indicates a mixed picture. The increase in staffing has in many cases brought an increase in service delivery capacity; in some cases the Fund has clearly enabled a rapid expansion in service delivery. Sometimes this increase in capacity has been large; as much as 3 or 4 fold. In other cases, increases have been more incremental. In a few projects activity has stayed the same in this year and for some, has even gone down. Many factors have affected service delivery capacity, such as numbers of young people able to access service and the throughput of young people.

4.12 Some projects had relatively well developed and long standing services to young people in place; others had none. For those developing services from scratch, increased capacity is inevitably slower to develop. There is a necessary probation and induction period. This had obvious consequences for service capacity for this particular time period. Some young people may only be in a refuge for short periods, for example a few nights. In these situations, there is little opportunity for staff to support them directly. The fund was specifically set up to support young people in refuge; then to provide follow-on services to this group; also to set up an outreach service. In this context, numbers of children and young people able to receive a service is limited by: the size of the refuge; absolute numbers of young people able to be housed in the refuge; the turnover of young people and families able to leave the refuge and be re-housed (then requiring follow-on service); and the ability of local housing markets to provide permanent housing for families. If refuge capacity is limited, if ability of local housing agencies to provide permanent housing is limited, the possibility of service expansion is limited.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, there is some evidence of young people being double counted. Projects were asked to report on the total number of young people accessing different kinds of support – ‘Refuge only (R)’ ‘Refuge Follow-on only (RFO)’ ‘Outreach only (OR)’. Some project returns include the same young people in both the ‘Refuge only’ category and in the ‘Refuge and Follow-on’ category. Reporting of Outreach work was inconsistent. Some projects reported very large numbers of young people worked with; others reported relatively small numbers; reflecting perhaps different definitions and understandings of Outreach work.

4.13 Case loads are often quite small for refuge workers – sometimes as low as five. However, young people coming to refuge have often had to leave home in traumatic circumstances and are often in need of more intensive support. Refuge workers tend to spend more direct hours with children and young people than follow-on or outreach workers. Follow-on and outreach workers have larger case loads: up to 15 to 16 cases for follow on workers; up to 20 cases for outreach workers. More refuge workers may mean that even when there are no more children receiving support, more children and young people may receive a more intensive level of support. The Fund has also allowed workers to develop the service and to undertake more partnership working.

### ***Issues with counting***

4.14 While there has been an increase in numbers of young people accessing service across all categories, the exact numbers remain difficult to determine. Reasons for this include:

- These are both new and rapidly expanding areas of work; yet to ‘bed down’. Across different projects, numbers are not yet being counted consistently
- Currently the outreach service provides different kinds of services – support to individual young people experiencing domestic abuse and living in the community on the one hand; it involves preventive work in schools, often with whole classes on the other. As well raising awareness of domestic abuse, this work is also a means of informing young people that it is possible for them to access support from Women’s Aid. Carrying out this work often results in an increase in numbers of young people receiving one to one support. There are inconsistencies between projects in what they measure and how they measure it
- There are also issues in relation to measuring follow-on services, with inconsistencies between projects; some counting cases which are inactive or ‘sleeping’, others not.

### ***Numbers as a proxy for outcomes for service effectiveness***

4.15 A number of stakeholders had reservations about using of numbers of children and young people accessing service as a measure of effective outcome. One stated that the service was operating at capacity and for more children to be supported there would need to be funding to increase staff. Others stated that families were not able to move on from refuge because there was a lack of other provision or accommodation; this limited the spaces available for new children to come into refuge.

4.16 One service co-ordinator explained that an increase in the number of children accessing a service through the refuge may simply mean the service is working with larger families. In contrast, she pointed out that an increase in numbers in outreach was a genuine increase because it was not related to the number of mothers accessing the service:

*‘Sometimes in refuge there are only two women but there are 10 children ... And sometimes all four flats are full but you only have two children because others don’t have children... But I just want to explain to you I don’t know how you can measure children increase because it’s somehow connected to the women’ (children’s worker).*

4.17 Working with a reduced number of children and young people but doing more in-depth work with them might actually produce better outcomes than working with a larger number. Another children's worker explained:

*'You're only doing a little tiny bit and it's not enough. When you get involved with a family, you see what else you could be doing to make life a lot better but you don't have the time or the money to do that. But it's all down to money isn't it. It's all down to resources so these families are never going to be high enough priority until they get to a crisis point themselves. Until everything breaks down and the statutory agencies kick in then you're just left. So I think it would be better if I was working with half the number of families but yet I was doing it properly, doing the whole service, doing the whole thing'(children's worker).*

### **Duration of service**

4.1 There is some information from a number of sources that Women's Aid staff may work with children over a longer time period than other services. There were mixed views about whether this was positive or negative.

4.2 Children's workers explained that young people they worked with needed support for longer, and that some young people can, and frequently do, contact the service again for further support. Some children's workers stressed that the support Women's Aid offers children and young people is different from the support other agencies can offer them precisely because it is not time limited:

*'And I think that's what makes a difference to other agencies is the fact that they know it's not time limited. Yes the one to one and the intense stuff is time limited to a certain extent for them. Once they get over the issues, we move on and that's healthy. But we're always there if they want to just give us a wee phone' (children's worker).*

4.3 However, another commented that within the organisation, staff may not be strategic enough about winding down and closing cases: this risked making some children dependent on the service:

*'That's definitely been my main challenge, myself, as a worker over the year. Working here, it's knowing when to kind of start to wrap up. I think to begin with, I didn't make it as clear as I needed to with the young person that this will be a finite service, it won't go on forever but we'll be here for this amount of time and this is what I'll do. As time has gone on, the more I've tried to push myself to make sure that this is quite in the front of my head, and it's helped greatly to define what I'm doing with the young person much more fully with that young person. They understand what to expect, and so it's easier for them to go 'ok, this is drawing to a close' rather than 'oh, you're leaving' (children's workers).*

4.4 Some services had introduced waiting lists for outreach services, suggesting the need for a strategic approach to winding down and closing cases; there may also be a need for a strategic approach to prioritising services according to levels of need.

### **Practice example:**

In some services where a child or young person no longer sees the children's worker the case is not closed but kept in an exit or 'sleeping' file. These children and young people are not seen on a one to one basis but there may still be some level of contact.

*‘Once the children are exited, their files get passed to me, and I put them on my database and automatically send them a letter saying ‘if you like, we can keep your name on the database. We’ll send you out a quarterly newsletter with information about our events, general things happening in xxxxx and free workshops and stuff, just games and stuff like that, we put that in the newsletter. If there are large trips out and things that we organise, we might get back in touch with them as well, just to make sure that their social networks remain buoyant, and that they’re getting out and connecting with other young people. I also let them know that if anything else arises after they’ve left, some of the children might have an issue with contact, or maybe there are things that are coming to the surface because of abuse that had happened before, they can get back in touch with us or the young person themselves can get directly back in touch with me and that’s not a problem. So I try to kind of keep in touch with them’ (children’s worker).*

### ***Satisfaction with expansion of service***

4.5 Local authority partners reported being content with the increases in the number of children supported by children’s support workers. In one case, this was particularly appreciated by the local authority partner as one of the posts had been vacant for some of the time; there was still an increase in the number of children supported. In another case, the local authority accepted that services would take some time to be established.

4.6 Local authority partners were aware of the service expansion, including an increase in group-work; more outreach, particularly through schools; growth in individual self-referrals and investment in raising awareness of the service. They were satisfied with the work to promote the service, resulting in other agencies becoming more aware of its existence. One reported that the outreach service had increased the number of teenagers accessing the service.

### **Summary and Recommendation: The accessibility of services**

<i>Summary</i>	<p>There has been progress towards meeting the aim of an increasing number of young people able to access a Women’s Aid service, across all categories.</p> <p>Local authority partners and other stakeholders seem satisfied with service expansion. Reservations were raised about using numbers of young people worked with as an indicator of service quality and/or as a proxy for good outcomes for young people, reasons for this were discussed.</p> <p>Reported data on numbers of young people accessing the children’s services at Women’s Aid is sometimes difficult to obtain. Numbers of young people receiving service in refuge are accurately recorded. There are inconsistencies across projects which are developing new follow-on and outreach services in the way they record and count young people.</p> <p>There was some information that within projects, staff may not be strategic enough about winding down and closing cases</p>
<i>Recommendation 2</i>	<p>Women’s Aid Projects should gather consistent and accurate base-line data about numbers and throughput of young people receiving services; across all categories (in refuge, and receiving follow-on and</p>

	outreach support). It would be useful if this was held and collated nationally and information based on this fed back to projects.
<i>Recommendation 3</i>	Women's Aid projects could consider introducing a more strategic approach to winding down and closing cases, to waiting lists, to allocating cases according to priority need.

### **Time spent in direct work with children and young people**

4.7 Another aim of the Fund was to enable an increase in the number of dedicated hours children's workers spend with children and young people. Headline information is that progress has been made towards this; there are increases in the amount of time spent in direct work with children across all areas of work. Within this, it varies: from project to project; in responses to the needs of individual children presenting for service; and in relation to different types of work. In general staff, children, mothers and other stakeholders seem satisfied with levels of support received. We discuss this below.

4.8 Information from a number of sources suggests there is little delay between children's first contact with Women's Aid and meeting a children's support worker. The children's questionnaire suggested that for more than a third of children this happens within a few hours; 40% have contact with a CSW within a day or a few days. For those remaining, 5% had contact after a few weeks, 4% after a few months or longer. 14% could not remember.

4.9 Staff highlighted that the number of contact hours is not prescribed; it varies according to the level of need presented by the child. For example, if a child or young person is assessed as having high levels of need, or is in a period of crisis, then s/he will be seen frequently – once a week or more. The level of contact will be less for a child or young person who is coping well – perhaps once a fortnight, or as infrequently as once a month:

*'...if we have got concerns and they need more work, then obviously we'd see them more, but it varies quite a bit; it very much depends .. it's needs led ... you know, you make your initial assessment with that child, and with the mum where it is appropriate, and you have to work with that to kind of move it on - to see what kind of support they are needing so we don't say you must spend two hours a week with that child, what we say is you'll spend the hours that you need..... but typically if you've got 12 kids in refuge, you've got 35 hours a week, you've got to plan the week to make sure that you spend enough time with the children in terms of what's needed' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

4.10 The number of dedicated hours children's workers spend with children and young people also varies with different types of work.

4.11 Refuge workers tend to have the most direct contact with children. Typically, they report one to one play sessions with younger children that can last an hour to an hour and a half, once a week; they tend to see older young people on a one to one basis up to three times a week for about an hour and a half each time. Children and young people in refuge are also often involved in group activities which may last for several hours a session. In addition, refuge workers see children and young people informally most days because they are based at the refuge:

*'I've got an open door policy ... the kids, generally when they come in from school, they always come through our door and they'll come in and they'll sit down and have a chat 'How was your day?'... So there's probably not one day goes by when you don't at least see them for about 10 minutes'(children's worker).*

4.12 Outreach workers tend to see children and young people once a week for around an hour at a time, although this varies considerably depending on individual need. Follow-on sessions appear to vary from an hour up to three hours a week; also dependent on need.

4.13 Generally, there was satisfaction with the time children's support workers spent with children. In interviews and from the questionnaire, children and young people seemed happy with the number of dedicated hours that children's workers spend with them:

*'It's an hour but see if we go over it, she's not like 'Oh that's an hour, right I need to go'. It's like an hour but if I'm finished before the hour she says 'Do you want to go?' and I say 'Yes I'm finished' and I can go. Or if I'm no finished before an hour she says 'Do you want another wee chat?' ... An hour is really good. If it's over an hour then it's amazing. If it's an hour then it's really good and if it's less than an hour then nothing bad's happened so woohoo!' (young person).*

4.14 In the questionnaire, children were asked if they felt they spent enough time with their children's support worker. Most, 99 (66%) reported they were happy with the amount of time they saw their children's support worker. A significant minority however, did report that they would like to see their worker more often 39 (26%). The younger children, rather than older children reported they would like to see their support worker more; and this was true for girls more than boys. In response to open ended questions about what support workers could do to help, two young people wrote; 'They could talk to me more, make more appointments' and 'don't give me a time limit when you go to see them'.

4.15 Some mothers also reported that it would be good if workers could spend more time with their children:

*'I think what we are getting is enough, but I think more wouldn't go amiss, you know, as far as wee [child's name] is concerned, cause he really enjoys his sessions' (mum).*

4.16 This was supported by local authority planners who reported they were satisfied that the amount of time children's support workers spent working directly with young people was appropriate.

4.17 With regard to winding down contact with children and closing cases, information from the projects and from children and their mothers suggests there is appropriate planning. Where children's contact with support workers had stopped or been reduced, children and mothers generally seemed to feel that this had been well handled with services negotiating ending support in ways which ensured children and young people were comfortable with this and when it was in their best interests. For example, while some of the children in the case studies had sometimes received support over a long period, the amount of direct time they spent with their children's worker had reduced. The children's worker had stopped working with the children or young people in two cases and in several others reported that she intended to take them out of the service altogether. In some cases the children's worker explained that while one to one work would cease the young person would still be



encouraged to attend group-work sessions to encourage social networking. One children's worker explained how she had gradually brought a case to a close:

*'And then as things became less kind of crisis level we went on to fortnightly. And then when we both, both me and the young person and mum all decided it seemed to be the right time tae end. So I took his, his version into it, like how was he feeling. It was coming to it that he didn't really have anything to talk about. It seemed to kind of come to a natural end... So before we actually ended it, we did a session on what supports were around for him. Like family, friends, teachers, myself, organisations, and what kind of support he thought he could get from each one. And he was told that, ken, it's an open door. If he felt he needed to come back that was fine'(children's worker).*

4.18 Children and their mothers reported that where contact had reduced or stopped this had happened appropriately and in response to reduced need. One fifteen year old boy reported that he saw his children's worker:

*'Maybe about every three or four weeks, something like that maybe, cos it used to be like every week then it kind of gradually stepped down to two weeks, then three, then maybe once a month or something like that, because I don't need [the children's worker] as much now, if you know what I'm saying, I can handle my own situations and that' (young person).*

4.19 One young person had herself come to the conclusion that she did not need to see her children's worker so often, prior to her Children's Worker asking her about this. Her mother reported:

*'She said to [the children's worker] 'I think I'll only see you once a fortnight', she says 'because you've really helped me and there could be somebody out there that needs you more than I do' (mum).*

4.20 Workers recognised that this vulnerable group of children may require further help in future. They made sure that mothers and children were aware of the possibility of being able to re-refer if things were difficult in the future.

4.21 One worker described how she had thought things were going well with one young person and had considered ending support. With hindsight she said she was glad she had not ended support as things had become much worse.

4.22 Children and mums reported that they were aware that even when a case had closed support could be accessed again in the future if necessary, for example:

*'You know, he's doing really well at the moment and I think he's got these strategies. But, you know, maybe in two years time or something he may be feeling again 'this is just shit. It's all cause of my dad that I'm being like this or that something's happened' or, you know... I mean he hasn't seen his dad for ages. Maybe when he actually sees his dad he's going to be in a right old fix again and want to have somebody to talk to' (mum).*

4.23 There were several examples of mothers re-referring children, for example, one mother re-referred her son because she felt he needed more support after his classmate had died and his dad had got back in touch.

4.24 While most cases seemed to be closed appropriately in response to need, there were a few examples of service ending or reducing because of resources and pressures on the service. In one case the children's worker reported seeing a boy with serious behavioural issues twice a week but had reduced the level of contact, initially to once a week, now to once a fortnight, because the service was short staffed. In another case a mum reported that her son's one to one sessions were sometimes cancelled if the children's worker was overworked and her son got quite disappointed if this occurred. The children's worker confirmed that children get disappointed if she has to reschedule their one to one sessions.

4.25 Children's workers reported some of the pressures on a small team of workers. For example, involvement in court cases can be particularly labour intensive, they can impact upon the amount of time they get to spend with other children and mean they sometimes have to cancel or change appointment times:

*'It's about managing time loads. If there's a crisis call it can put out your other appointments. We only have one advocacy worker so she's very hard pushed. If there's social work involvement it can be time consuming. A court case can sometimes run for a week, I was in court in [name of town] for a week. Two of the workers had to go to court in [name of city] recently and that throws everything else out' (children's worker).*

4.26 There is some evidence that the service may be under-resourced at the highest levels of need, for example:

*'I think a lot of the kids that I'm working with ... I think they would benefit from a lot more support. Once a week for an hour, I don't think..., I suppose anything's better than nothing but it would be more beneficial if they were seeing somebody more regularly to benefit from the service. Because it can be, you know, you are seeing one, one week and it's not till nearer the end of the session that you know that they'll start to sort of maybe open up or whatever and then you don't see them again for another week and it's back to the start again' (children's worker).*

### **Summary and Recommendation: Time spent in direct work**

<i>Summary</i>	Progress has been made towards the aim of increasing the number of dedicated hours children's workers spend with children and young people. This is true across all categories of work. Within this, it varies: from project to project; in response to the levels of needs of individual children presenting for service; and in relation to different types of work. Staff working in refuge spend most time in direct contact with children. In general, staff, children and mothers, local authority partners and other stakeholders, seem satisfied with levels of support. A minority of children reported wanting to spend more time with children's support workers, this seems to apply more to younger children, and to girls rather than boys. There is some evidence of under-resourcing to support children with the greatest levels of need.
<i>Recommendation 4</i>	Women's Aid projects should gather consistent and accurate baseline data about the number of hours children's support workers spend in direct contact with children and young people.
<i>Recommendation 5</i>	Women's Aid projects should keep under review services to children

	with the greatest levels of need.
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## Flexibility of service

4.27 One objective of the Fund was to increase the flexibility and range of hours within which services to young people were provided. From the reporting templates, there is evidence of out of hours work, as follows:

- All 40 projects who reported had held sessions with young people weekdays between 9.00 – 5.00
- 29 projects had held more than half of their sessions weekdays between 9.00 – 5.00
- 39 projects held some sessions in the evenings
- 9 projects held at least half of their sessions in the evenings
- 18 projects held sessions at weekends.

4.28 Thus while projects are mainly offering support sessions to young people weekdays 9.00 – 5.00, most are also providing some sessions in the evening. A minority of projects run support sessions at the weekend. The extent to which this pattern meets the needs of young people is now discussed.

4.29 Staff reported that flexible working hours are normally part of a children's worker's contract. The level and nature of flexibility tends to vary, project by project and according to type of work. Outreach workers are based in schools and tend to work within school hours. In contrast, refuge workers tend to do most direct work with children outside of school hours. It is more common for them to work into the evening. Some services provide a service on Saturdays.

4.30 Staff reported little demand for a weekend service; this is when most children and young people have contact with their fathers. They reported that they would be willing to provide a service at weekends if service users requested this:

*'... if we had a child that we could only see at weekends then any worker that worked with that child would have to come on that weekend because we do flexible working and it's already in people's contracts that we would work on the weekend. We don't make it a rule that you've got to come in on Saturday but if we think there is work to be done then that worker will come in on a Saturday instead of coming on Monday' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

4.31 Despite children having contact with fathers at the weekend, one children's worker suggested that a service available over the weekend to support children may be desirable:

*'So what we would do, it doesn't happen an awful lot, the young people are wonderful. They know that we are not working. But what they would do, what we would say, especially if they are going on contact, we will say 'listen if there is anything happening and you are fearful just give us a phone and we'll talk you through it', you know. And the mums know that as well, yeah. Mums know that as well, you know, if they come back from contact and the kids are up on the ceiling somewhere, they know they can contact us and say 'look what do I do here? Is this a*

*problem? Have you any ideas?’ Or ‘What should I do, you know, do you want to talk to them?’ And sometimes just a wee word from us saying ‘look I’ll see you on Monday, I’ll come in school first thing in the morning and meet with you and talk about this’ sometimes can bring them down’ (children’s worker).*

4.32 While children’s workers allocate regular times for children and young people to see them, out of hours working is not uncommon. This seems mainly informal and generated by young people themselves or their mothers – some staff report that young people are able to contact them by phone or e-mail out of hours if necessary; and most services reported having an on call service that young people can access:

*‘... our mobiles are on all the time. So what we would do is if a young person was distressed or anything they would phone us directly. And we also have our on call phone line ...,... . We’ve always got a twenty four hour call line so we do a rota for that ... if it wasn’t a children’s worker that was on and a child phoned then they would refer it to, they would contact myself or another one of the children’s workers if it was seen as appropriate’ (children’s worker).*

4.33 In general, there was support for the way the out of hours service was organised. Several respondents raised the possibility of setting up a national or centralised resource to meet some out of hours demands; for example a helpline for children.

4.34 Young people and mothers confirmed that young people can contact their children’s worker out of hours:

*‘... if [her daughter] needs [the children’s worker] she’s got her number as well – her office number. So if there are any problems that she can’t get me, she could phone [the children’s worker] and [she] could help her ... If I’ve got any problems, I phone [her], and I just say to her if there’s any way that she could come up and see me, or else if she could just go up to the school and see [the child]’ (mum).*

*‘And it’s also good because she’s always got her phone on so if something happens, like, if I went home tonight and something had happened, I could phone her and she’d be there and I could just pin her up against the wall. No matter what she did, she could be in the middle of the shopping centre, but she’d come on the phone and talk to me’ (young person).*

4.35 While the young person quoted above knew that the children’s worker would be there for her, she said she would not abuse this and reported that she would not phone her unless things were really bad.

4.36 While children and young people generally reported being satisfied with when they saw their support worker, a sizeable minority reported they would have liked them to be around at different times. Questionnaire responses highlighted that three quarters of children in both groups (109 older children; 101 younger children) reported having access to support workers during the day; around half (86 older; 63 younger) reported having access to them into the evening. The older age group were asked if they would like them to be available more at other times; most reported being happy to see their support worker when they did. However, one in five (25) reported they would like them to be around more in the day than in the evening. Views were mixed about whether or not they wanted support workers to be around at the weekend - a third (23) wanted them to be available more, a half (39) wanted

them around the same amount of time at the weekend; 16 (20%) wanted them to be around less often at the weekend. Some mothers also requested more evening and after hours support for their children.

4.37 With regard to flexibility around the location and timing of meetings, there was agreement that this was offered flexibly according to the preferences of children and young people. Support staff reported that children have an important say in this:

*'They've got a big say in where they want it. Do they want it in Women's Aid? Do they want it at school? Do they want it at home? Do they want to go for a drive, café? That's their decision too. How often they want to see me is their decision. Do they want to see me fortnightly, do they want to see me weekly, what time of night do they want to see me? Weekends? Can be any time. I try to set by an hour and a half, but it can...I mean they can stop at any time ... I try and keep them like on a weekly time slot. But if someone said 'actually this is not a good time for me, I dinnae like being taken out of class at school. I would prefer it eight o'clock at night at my own home', that would be fine too' (children's worker).*

4.38 Outreach workers reported that although the majority of outreach sessions are held at school, they would take a young person's or their mum's wishes into account if they did not want meetings to take place in school. For example, if a relative worked in the school, if a mother did not want their child missing classes, or if a young person did not want their friends knowing they were accessing a service:

*'But I mean definitely we see children outwith, you can see children at lunchtime, some children don't want you to come into the school to see them. So I'll say 'well what's an alternative?' And we'll say 'right I'll pick you up at lunchtime at the school and we'll go in and have a wee cup of coffee or something and you can have your lunch and we'll talk'. So I mean very much it's very flexible that way. But we try, but so that the young person still goes home at the same time. Do you see what I mean? Cause a lot of children, the older ones, their parents, their mums don't know that we are seeing them. So they cannae be late home' (children's worker).*

4.39 One mum told us her daughter no longer wanted to meet her children's worker in school so she had arranged instead to pick her up from school and take her somewhere else:

*'If [daughter] cannae go at that time that's alright, we'll find another time. Or she realised she didn't really want to do it during school. Obviously she's got a wee bit bigger and she didn't want to do it at school. But it's no' a problem for [children's worker] to get her at three' (mum).*

4.40 There was one example of a girl who did not like having one to one sessions in school because her friends wanted to know where she was going; she did not feel she could raise this with her children's worker.

4.41 Interviews with partner organisations and stakeholders confirmed they felt that the service offered by Women's Aid to children was very flexible. Social workers said that children's support workers had more time to spend with children than social workers. One felt that children's workers were able to meet the needs of children over the longer term which social workers would be unable to do. It is possible many of these children would not otherwise receive a service.

4.42 Local authority officers<sup>7</sup> felt services were child centred and tailored to meet the needs of children and young people. They mentioned the commitment of individual staff to provide a service. Examples included the willingness of workers to do as much as they could for a child. They felt that the general ethos and individual staff commitment meant the services were tailored around the individual children and young people receiving support. Examples of this were the development by some groups of support via phone and email.

4.43 With regard to plans to expand the out of hours service, local authority officers raised a note of caution. There could be difficulties in relation to staff safety, particularly where staff were working alone; there could be problems for services covering large geographical and isolated areas. Here workers may meet a young person alone some distance from the Women's Aid office. There could difficulties in relation to the costs involved in hiring suitable premises:

*'...and also hiring halls is quite expensive which we don't have money for. The Scottish Executive hasn't given us any money for that this year. Or the next or the next. Last year because there was money we hired some halls but it costs £80 per day' (Women's Aid Service Co-ordinator).*

#### **Summary and Recommendation: Flexibility of service provision**

<i>Summary</i>	<p>There was widespread agreement that services were flexibly delivered, child centred and tailored to meet the needs of children and young people.</p> <p>There was evidence of out of hours and weekend contact at the level children want. However, a sizeable minority of children would have liked support workers around at times other than they were.</p> <p>Out of hours contact seems informally organised, largely initiated by families and mainly to involve contact over the phone to deal with particular problems or crises arising. Barriers to further expansion of out of hours service raised were the need for suitable affordable premises; and worker safety.</p>
<i>Recommendation 6</i>	Local Authorities and Women's Aid groups may wish to consider addressing practical barriers which may make it difficult to further expand the group-work and outreach services; for example, difficulties of organising groups in rural areas; finding affordable, suitable premises to meet the different demands of new services.
<i>Recommendation 7</i>	Women's Aid could consider setting up a national or centralised resource to meet out of hours and weekend demand for children's services; for example a helpline for children.

#### **Reaching hard-to-reach young people**

4.44 Projects reported effective mechanisms in place to identify and work with some categories of 'hard to reach' children and young people. Definitions of 'hard to reach' groups

<sup>7</sup> Nine local authority officers were interviewed about the working of the Fund from their perspective. Initial contact was made with the Children's Services Planner. Interviews were conducted with the senior official who knew most about the Fund. These were Children's Services Planners (4), Planning Officers and Commissioning Officers (2).

differed across projects but often included minority ethnic groups, children with disabilities, children living in rural and island authorities. Some groups included children and young people experiencing domestic abuse but still living at home.

### ***General mechanisms for increasing awareness and access***

4.45 Local authority partners and other stakeholders reported that they were aware that progress had been made by children's workers with regard to hard to reach groups. This had been done primarily through promotion and raising awareness of the service with specific groups mainly via work in schools. They were also aware of mechanisms used by Women's Aid to target children of substance misusing parents, and minority ethnic groups.

4.46 Staff reported that awareness raising in schools was an effective way of accessing hard to reach young people; they cited lack of outreach workers as a barrier to reaching them:

*'At the moment, how the outreach service works at the moment is we tend to have a referral from, say from a school, and the way that it has worked is that for instance the first referral that I got was from the school in quite a deprived area; it was the [name of] area and then I was inundated with referrals from that school so very quickly you're actually....the areas in which you work are very condensed and ideally you would then be trying to contact schools in different areas and reaching lots of different hard to reach children; because the need is so great and we are so short staffed you tend just to be quite flooded with referrals from quite a condensed area' (children's worker).*

4.47 Schools themselves could sometimes be the barrier to being able to target hard to reach young people. One service wanted to raise awareness in schools as a way of accessing young people whose mothers did not access a service; the local authority had taken some time to allow them to finally run a pilot project:

*'...it would have been really good if she could have gone out and just raised the whole issue within a group, so that young people who were maybe supporting friends could have then supported their friend in coming forward to access the one to one service, or people who were actually within the group that, you know, there were other services there that they could access for themselves' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

### ***Children with mothers not accessing service***

4.48 Children and young people who are still living with domestic abuse and whose mums are not accessing a service were identified as particularly difficult to reach. In 14 of the 15 case studies, the children had mothers who were also accessing a Women's Aid service. There were no examples of young people self referring. Outreach services within schools were seen as the main mechanisms for targeting these young people.

### ***Children with disabilities***

4.49 Children with disabilities were identified as a particularly difficult to reach group by some services. None of the case studies involved children with disabilities so they did not provide any evidence of whether services meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities:

*'... it's difficult to identify them; how do we identify those? Who knows where they are; you've got to know where they are' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

4.50 Some services did report that they worked with children with learning difficulties, Asperger's syndrome and ADHD and that refugees were able to meet the needs of children with disabilities:

*'...it's a barrier free refuge and they've got a sensory room to work with them; children that might have some kind of learning difficulty or they're autistic or asperger's or something like that; they can target specific services for their needs like an asperger's befriending group ... if there's something specific for that if it is asperger's then we have that service' (children's worker).*

4.51 However, relatively few children's workers reported that they had experience of working with children with disabilities. Staff did not provide detailed information about what they thought the barriers to this work were. They were aware they could access support from other sources:

*'...if it got really difficult we would access somebody to come in and help us to work with that child so we wouldn't just say well actually this child's got special needs so we can't work with them' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

### **Minority ethnic populations**

4.52 Three of the fifteen case studies were children from minority ethnic groups: two in a service which works specifically in this area. The other case was a mum with no recourse to public funds who had come through the outreach service. A number of services reported that they were working with an increased number of families whose first language was not English. One service said they were working with a number of children from Eastern Europe and had also worked with a number of families where mothers had had no recourse to public funds:

*'And its about finding different ways to support them because sometimes they are not in refuge because they can't get housing benefits so it's about making sort of special trips to see them or making a point of taking them out and doing something with them' (children's worker).*

4.53 Several services identified minority ethnic groups as hard to reach:

*'I've worked with the minority population's worker at the ... team to try and engage with the women but that's proved quite problematic. In [name of local authority] it's very, very difficult to find out where people are; it's so spread out; it's not like cities where people live in areas like [part of city], for example, in [city]' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

4.54 The Chinese community were identified as particularly hard to reach in one area. One service that works specifically with ethnic minority groups mentioned that overcoming the stigma attached to domestic abuse in some cultures is a significant barrier. A co-ordinator in another service told us she did not believe minority groups would be reached unless more workers were employed from minority backgrounds:



*'... it's those hard to reach clients, those with disabilities, those from minority groups and I'm talking about all minority groups because I think those are the clients that find it really difficult and I do think ... there's a need for ..., and I've said this before and I'll say it now, is that to include minority groups they've got to be able to engage with the worker from that particular group so I think there's some encouragement needed to employ workers on an outreach basis particularly that are from a minority group... I think it would be good to pilot something with workers from minority groups ... just to see how it would work' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

4.55 Despite this, this worker reported that she felt progress had been made. Some years ago women accessing the service were white and Scottish, now there were families from Poland and Zimbabwe. She felt the local authority domestic abuse minority worker had helped promote awareness of the service amongst ethnic groups.

### ***Rural and island communities***

4.56 Rural communities, particularly island communities, were acknowledged to be as another hard to reach group. One service was trying to provide a service to island communities. There were examples from case studies of young people from island communities who were able to access a service. However, one island family reported not being able to access a service until they moved to the mainland. In another case the family lived on a very remote island and was only able to access a service sporadically. There are case examples relating to this at the end of the section.

### **Summary and Recommendation: Hard to reach young people**

<i>Summary</i>	<p>Projects reported effective mechanisms in place to identify and work with categories of 'hard to reach' children and young people. Definitions of 'hard to reach' groups differed across projects but often included; minority ethnic groups, children with disabilities, children living in rural and island authorities.</p> <p>Some groups included children and young people experiencing domestic abuse but still living at home as a hard to reach group.</p> <p>Local Authority partners and other stakeholders were aware of and appreciated progress made by projects in striving to reach hard to reach groups. Outreach work and awareness raising in schools was seen as an effective way of accessing hard to reach young people</p>
<i>Recommendation 8</i>	Women's Aid projects should consider developing a more strategic approach to reaching hard to reach children and young people

### **The Outreach service**

4.57 The outreach service works with children and young people experiencing domestic abuse who have not had contact with a Women's Aid refuge. At the point of evaluation, projects were at various stages of developing and introducing outreach services for young people who have experienced domestic abuse but who have not had contact with a refuge.

4.58 Headline information is that that even at this early stage the services seem to be operating effectively across the ten sample projects. They were valued by partner organisations and other stakeholders. One local authority partner commended them for: the

professional delivery of presentations to staff and to young people; for sensitivity to the stigma involved in seeking help, for example a drop-in service was offered following the awareness raising session. In another case, a head teacher said Women's Aid had done 6-8 awareness raising sessions in his school - *'I can't rate it highly enough, it was fantastic'*. He wanted to establish a rolling programme of outreach work. Another education respondent said Women's Aid staff talk at young people's level and deliver sessions at their level. The specific role of the service is not yet well specified, with different models of outreach being delivered across different projects:

*'I have been to conferences and meetings where I have met other outreach workers from other Women's Aid groups where they have done it very differently. So we predominantly ... I spend half my week in schools, we predominantly made that link with schools. Other workers do much more group-work or do work in homes ... or do referrals through social work ... so it is interesting I suppose that it has allowed for our interpretation of the job' (outreach worker).*

### **Expansion of the outreach service**

4.59 Projects report that referrals to the outreach service are from schools, school nurses, social workers, voluntary organisations, mothers and children and young people themselves. Services cited an increase in referrals from social work and from children themselves as evidence of raised awareness of the service and as evidence of success. In some areas the outreach service has introduced waiting lists:

*'We are covering all of [name of city] so it is just huge. It feels sometimes that we open a bit of a can of worms and that we have opened up a problem in society that hugely needs addressed especially across [name of city] and all the kind of areas in [name of city] ... and children are needing support and we are not able to cover, sufficiently cover that problem' (children's worker).*

4.60 Below we set out 5 case study examples where families who had never lived in a refuge were receiving an outreach service. In some of these cases, support from Women's Aid is the only service the children and young people were receiving.

#### **Outreach case example 1:**

In this case the outreach worker had been proactive in identifying that the young person needed support. An older brother, who was receiving support from agencies in relation to his offending behaviour, had initially been referred to the service. When the children's worker visited he refused to engage with her. She spoke to the younger brother and recognised he needed support. The young person's mum felt it was really important that there was another adult, other than herself, who was there to support her son, particularly since no-one had been supporting him because all the support had been concentrated on his older brother. The young person reported feeling happier, more settled and more confident as a result of the support he had received from the children's worker. He said she had been helpful and had made his life better.

### **Outreach case example 2:**

This family lived in rural Scotland. The mother had been unable to access any other form of formal or informal support:

*'It was this tiny little school. So having somebody that he could come and speak to was really important ... I think one of the really important things to us, as a family, is that there isn't anyone else. And I think that's why Women's Aid have been so important. I don't have family ... It took me, you know, over two years after separating from [partner], to actually have a permanent address. So we haven't even built up a sort of infrastructure of people' (mum).*

The children's worker had recently finished working with this young person and felt there had been positive outcomes:

*'... as the sessions went on, I'd say his confidence grew. . He wasnae so anxious about, 'if dad phones what do I do'. It seemed, like his anxieties seemed to go down as the sessions progressed ... In his feedback it says 'I know what to do when dad phones me. Having someone to talk to without my mum there'. That was what he thought was really, really good' (children's worker).*

The young person told us he was less worried, more confident, and more settled and now understood more about domestic abuse. His mum agreed that the support her son had received through the outreach service had been very effective:

*'I think it's given him the confidence to be able to say what he wants and be able to actually say it. I think he might have thought things but I think this has actually given him a chance to actually say ... And if his dad asks him questions he has answers to give. They are not answers that have been put into his head. They are just suggestions of the ways that he could handle things. And I think having that third party actually making those suggestions rather than me is a really good thing. So I think it's actually empowered him to have a bit of control over his life that otherwise he might not have had' (mum).*

### **Outreach case example 3:**

In this case Women's Aid provided valuable support to a family who were unable to access support from anywhere else except their local church since they were non British and had no recourse to public funds. Because of this they had been unable to move into a refuge. However, the children's worker had helped mum to find a private let as well as providing support to her three children. The mum told us she and her children would never have been able to leave the abusive situation without this outreach support.

#### **Outreach case example 4:**

This case demonstrates that schools are aware of and making referrals to the outreach service. The young person lived with her grandmother (she had lived in a domestic abuse situation when she had lived with her mother several years previously). The school nurse had referred her to the outreach service when support from social work had come to an end:

*'The school nurse actually referred her. The school nurse had been seeing [her] weekly or fortnightly or just whenever she kind of could see her. Because there was social work involvement with [her] years ago, when her mum left her at her gran's. And, for whatever reason, they got to the stage where they thought 'there's nothing more we can really do because things have settled down, gran is coping'. So the services withdrew, but she's still a young lady who needs an awful lot of support. So the school nurse referred her to me, because there had been horrendous domestic abuse in her background, not that she'll remember huge amounts of it but she's been told a lot. Gran has also been in abusive situations with subsequent partners. She was referred basically because she doesn't cope very well with social situations at school. Her social presentation is not great. Her self esteem, self confidence, making and retaining friends, all those kind of things' (outreach worker).*

The case highlights the extent to which domestic abuse in a young person's past can still affect them many years, in this case six years, later. The children's worker, gran and the young person felt the outreach service had been effective. Gran felt her granddaughter had calmed down a lot, thought about things more, and was happier and more outgoing. The young person told us:

*'It is behind me. So I have moved on ... what happened was I wasn't confident at meeting people. So she helped me become confident' (young person).*

#### **Summary and Recommendation: Outreach services**

<i>Summary</i>	<p>At the point of evaluation some projects were at early stages of developing the outreach service.</p> <p>Partner organisations, other stakeholders and services themselves report that these services are operating effectively; if expanding rapidly.</p> <p>Their specific role is not yet well defined and different models of outreach are being delivered across projects.</p>
<i>Recommendation 9</i>	<p>Given the rapid expansion of the outreach service across Women's Aid, there may be benefit in taking stock of how this aspect of the service has developed. Greater clarity about the function and purpose of the outreach service and providing opportunities for practitioners to share positive practice experiences of the work may be useful</p>
	<p>Also see recommendation 6</p>

#### **Raising awareness and publicising services**

4.61 Projects reported a range of work to raise awareness of and promote the children's service. They cited increased numbers of referrals from social work and education as evidence that awareness had risen. Examples included attendance at multi-agency meetings and forums where the service is promoted, stalls at local events, posters and leaflets in doctors' surgeries, dentists, police stations, social work departments, housing agencies, youth services, schools and voluntary organisations. One service reported having posters in local toilets. Some stake holders commended the high quality of Women's Aid leaflets.

One person who worked in a school said there should be more advertising of the service, especially in primary schools. Others reported innovative ways of promoting the service:

*'When I first started, I went to every social work department and every, we call them LCNs up here (Local Community Networks). Each area has an LCN that's made up of all the different professionals working in that area. And it's a forum that you can go to if you want to promote your service. It's about all the agencies working together, it's an inter-agency thing. So I went to all the LCNs and I went to all the ASGs which is the Associated School Groups. And I went to every secondary school guidance department, letting them know that the service was available and they could refer or young people could refer themselves' (outreach worker).*

**Practice examples:**

Following gaining information about the service:

A school nurse referred a young person to the service

A grandmother referred her granddaughter after hearing about the service at a health day at her school

A number of mothers self referred - including some mothers and children living in very rural, remote areas who were not in touch with any other services

One woman referred herself after finding out about the service when attending couples' counselling. The children received a service

One woman had contacted the service after seeing a poster about it at the library – children were also helped

A guidance teacher informed us the school she works in provides domestic abuse awareness-raising in Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons. Some referrals are received because of this.

**Practice examples:**

One service worked with a private company to produce lip balm which was distributed to young people in schools. The phone number of the service had been printed where the bar code would normally be.

Another service spoke on local radio on a regular basis and placed a weekly advert in the local paper.

4.62 Many report that multi-agency training was an effective way of raising awareness of services. Several suggested that GPs, teachers, head teachers and sheriffs might benefit from mandatory training on domestic abuse to improve understanding. One mother, herself a teacher, suggested that teachers in general have little awareness of domestic abuse:

*'... as a teacher we don't really have that much experience of dealing with families that, you know, that being in the situation of domestic abuse and, I mean I've been on a course recently with Women's Aid.' 'but I've been teaching for twenty years and it's the first time I've actually done anything on domestic abuse. And I think, you know, other people may not have that specialism I guess' (mum/teacher).*

4.63 The case studies also provided a small number of examples of people not being aware of the service:

- In one case a mother had received a service for her children when she had lived in a city. She had since moved to a different town and had been unaware that there was a Women's Aid service in the area until informed of it by a social worker.
- One mother who had suffered emotional, not physical, abuse had approached Citizen's Advice to find out how she could get herself and her children away from an emotionally abusive partner but had not been told about Women's Aid.

4.64 Information from the case studies suggested the need for Women's Aid to publicise a modern image of refuges. Some mothers reported they had been reluctant to contact Women's Aid, because of negative and erroneous perceptions of refuge life. Most women interviewed were pleased with the family accommodation they had been given.

### Summary and Recommendation: Publicising services

<i>Summary</i>	Most Women's Aid services demonstrated effective promotion of their children's services; there were some particularly innovative examples. There were also examples where professionals and service users had been unaware of the services for children. Awareness training for other professionals was mentioned as the most effective way of raising awareness of the service. Information from mothers suggests the need to promote a modern image of refuge accommodation
<i>Recommendation 10</i>	Women's Aid could give consideration to a campaign promoting a positive and modern image of refuges

### Opportunities and barriers to increasing access to services

4.65 The Fund has had a significant impact in terms of increasing access by children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse. Services themselves feel the Fund has made an impact in increasing access by children and young people in the time period:

*'I think it's been really successful in that we now have the workers, you know whereas before we didn't have the children's workers...that service was just simply not there before, in that sense it's fabulous. For years I have sat here, and my colleagues were sat here and we were counselling women and doing therapeutic work with them but that service wasn't available for children or for children whose mums weren't coming to us' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

4.66 Services also mentioned barriers or potential barriers to future continued development. These include staff shortages, lack of time, lack of premises or appropriate premises. Some mentioned the particular barriers for island communities or people living in rural areas. Young people's reluctance to access services was identified as an additional barrier. Children's workers felt that young people might not be confident enough to access a service, particularly if they did not know what the consequences of their actions might be:

*'... it's probably the unknown and I think this is where the sessions in the schools work really well because if we have them on a rolling programme and everybody at some point in their life in school gets that domestic abuse awareness session then they've got the background to say actually I could do with that service. Whereas if they are going in blind and they didn't know, then it wouldn't really work for them so I think that that's the best way in' (children's worker).*

4.67 Services made a number of suggestions as to how the number of young people accessing a service could be further increased; for example, domestic abuse awareness raising should be part of the national curriculum in the same way that sexual abuse awareness is being covered in primary schools.

### **Summary and Recommendation 1: Opportunities and barriers to increasing access to Women's Aid services**

<i>Summary</i>	While the Fund has made an impact on increasing the access young people have to Women's Aid services a number of potential barriers to the future continued development of Women's Aid children's services were identified. These included, staff shortages, lack of time, lack of premises or appropriate premises. There were particular challenges for island communities and young people living in rural areas. Young people's reluctance to access services was identified as an additional barrier.
<i>Recommendation</i>	See Recommendation 6

## **AIM 2:- INCREASED RANGE OF SPECIALIST SERVICES THAT MEET THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE**

### **5. AIM 2:- SPECIALIST SERVICES TO MEET THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE**

#### **Introduction**

5.1 Findings for this section of the report relate to the second stated aim of having an increased range of specialist services that meet the diverse needs of young people and to the specific objectives to provide: one to one support, a group-work service and to use a key worker approach. Projects were also asked to use holistic assessment, support plans and other tools, provide age appropriate, ability appropriate and diverse services, and to provide opportunities to build social networks.

5.2 Evidence for this was collated from service effectiveness interviews, case study interviews with children's support workers, mothers, children and young people, the children's questionnaire, stakeholder interviews with mothers and children's support workers.

#### **The importance to children of children's support workers**

5.3 Information from across the study; from case study interviews with children and young people and from questionnaire returns strongly endorse the importance to young people of the children's support workers and the extent to which they value them and want to spend time on their own with them.

5.4 Case study children reported that one to one sessions allowed them to talk about what went on at home and about their feelings. They reported that they trusted their children's worker and could tell her things they would not tell anyone else:

*'I tell her everything. I pin her up against the wall and tell her everything that's been wrang. She tells me how to deal with it – 'this looks like...' der de der de der; 'you could probably help this by...' der de der de der. But, anything else it's, like, ermmmm. Nah, she helps, like – tadaa! She's like, she's like a star! .... A pink star! ... What she makes clear is, see when I say that I'm happy now, she says you don't always need to be happy, you can actually greet sometimes' (young person).*

5.5 Mothers confirmed children enjoyed one to one sessions:

*'And they really love the one to one session cause they are getting the individual attention which they, obviously because there's two of them and one of me, they don't get individual attention very often from anybody' (mum).*

5.6 Information from the questionnaire reinforced this. The majority of younger children (110 – 87%) found children's support workers 'very helpful'; a further 17 – 13% found them 'helpful'. Of the older children 121 - 81% said the children's support worker was 'very



helpful'; a further 26 – 18% had found them 'helpful'. Only one respondent said that the Children's Support Worker was 'unhelpful'. Responses to open ended questions about what was 'the best thing about children's support workers' are set out in the box below:

**Table 7: Children's views of support workers**

Children's questionnaire responses to open ended questions about children's support workers
<p>In both versions of the questionnaire children and young people were asked to give examples of 'the best thing about children's support workers'.</p> <p>A recurring theme was being able to talk to children's support workers and that a children's support worker listens to them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having my children's support worker there to talk to and share my feelings and thoughts with</li> <li>• They know what you have been through and you can talk to them and open up and they understand</li> <li>• Being able to talk to them about stuff I can't really talk about that much.</li> </ul> <p>There was also the practical reason that children's support workers were available for children and young people to talk to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are around when you want to talk to them</li> <li>• My worker was very good at seeing me and always there for me. Without her I would have been very scared and confused.</li> </ul> <p>For many it was helpful that children's support workers were 'there for you'; that you could talk to them in confidence; you were able to trust them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nice and helpful and listens to me and tells mum only if I say so</li> <li>• Having time to talk and listen to me</li> <li>• I could tell her anything as I could trust her</li> <li>• You can ask for anything and they try to understand or you can talk to them privately or out loud and you know you can trust them and your secrets are safe with them.</li> </ul> <p>Children support workers also listen non-judgmentally and take the young person seriously:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She listens to me and helps me understand why I feel upset, sad, angry etc</li> <li>• They listen to me and make me feel my opinions matter</li> <li>• You can speak to them and they listen. They tell you the problems from both angles so you understand.</li> </ul> <p>Respondents found advice from children's support workers useful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can talk to them when you need help and they will give you advice</li> <li>• Make you feel special</li> <li>• Make you happy</li> <li>• Make fairy cakes</li> <li>• The best thing is that they help me realise what others have been put through and help me and my family to be normal</li> <li>• She helps my family stay more together.</li> </ul>

## Summary and Recommendation: The importance to children of children's support workers

<i>Summary</i>	Information from across the study; from case study interviews with children and young people and from questionnaire returns strongly endorse the importance to young people of the children's support worker and the extent to which they value them and want to spend time on their own with them.
<i>Recommendation 11</i>	New service development should take account of the extent to which children and young people value the service provided by children's support workers

### The role of the children's support worker

5.7 Most children's support workers support children spanning a wide age range and cover a wide spectrum of need.

5.8 With regard to age, they work with children from birth to 16, although most services reported that support would not stop once a young person was 16:

*'It's up to young people how long they want to maintain contact for, it's put back on them whether they feel they still need support. Support doesn't stop at 16' (children's worker).*

5.9 With respect to need, children's support workers reported that the role is wide and involves a spectrum of activities from practical tasks of supporting mothers by child minding and organising child care, to intensively supporting highly traumatised teenagers:

*'... we have had refugee children that we've had to work with. And they were quite young, a lot of them. And we did practical things like get them into a nursery, because they are moving from one area to another area. So it was quite practical things like getting them...it was, like, a foreign mum...so, my work was getting that young child into a nursery that was near the refuge. When mum was receiving counselling I would look after the younger one, and go and fetch him from the nursery. So a lot of it was practical work, and maybe not so much of the therapeutic work' (children's worker).*

5.10 At the other end of the spectrum, children's support workers reported that many of the children who come into contact with Women's Aid are seriously traumatised, some may require specialised support. Children's workers often have to deal with a number of other issues in addition to domestic abuse – bereavement, sexual abuse, physical abuse, behavioural problems and so on. For example, one seven year old boy's experiences highlight the huge impact domestic abuse can have on a young child's behaviour:

*'[the young person] had to go and stay at my mum's because he attacked me with a golf club and I had to sort of shut his room door and leave him just to smash his room up. Em he's ran away, we had him at the police station twice, em, setting fires and he's only seven, jumpin' oot the windae' (mum).*

5.11 Some children's workers told us the wide variety of work that they do is one of the best things about their job: Others acknowledged, however, that working with very young

children can be difficult because they do not understand the concept of domestic abuse and trying to do therapeutic work with them can be challenging:

*'I think just the wide variety of the work I do means I can be working with a four year old, you know, doing drawing or in the playhouse or puppets or that. And then maybe my next client might be fifteen ... there's different approaches to every case. There's such a wide variety' (children's worker).*

*'I tend to find that if you're trying to do something specific, the older the child is, the easier it is to engage them in that. If they're really, really young, like four or five, it's just about playing, because they're not old enough to really talk about a lot of the issues that are going on. So, I find it easier working with the slightly older age groups.' (children's worker).*

5.12 Workers reported that the children's support worker post may not be best placed to meet the needs of all young people or to meet all the needs of individual young people. Sometimes in the absence of other agencies to refer to, or where there are waiting lists for specialist services they continue to work with the young person. Some reported that it may be timely to review the content of the post.

#### **Summary and Recommendation: The role of the children's support worker**

<i>Summary</i>	Most children's support workers support children spanning a wide age range and cover a wide spectrum of need. With regard to age, they work with children from birth to 16. With respect to need, the role is wide and involves a spectrum of activities from practical tasks of supporting mothers by child minding and organising child care, to intensively supporting highly traumatised teenagers.
<i>Recommendation 12</i>	There may be merit in reviewing the children's support worker post. Consideration could be given to splitting the post into distinct roles.

#### **Children's support workers and parent support**

5.13 Some children's workers identified a need to provide family support as well as individual support to children and young people. They reported that in some areas where there is no women's outreach service, women themselves were not able to access a service. Some children's workers identified this as a problem in terms of working to promote good outcomes for children. One children's worker explained the issue:

*'... because, some of the time, we might be the only agency involved. And if you get a referral for quite a young child, it's difficult to know where your job stops and starts, because you know that there are things going on at home. And it might be that domestic abuse happened and the abusive partner is no longer there, but the mum's finding it difficult to cope. But our remit is not about parenting but I think it kind of needs to be a dual support role. I shouldn't just be working with a child in isolation and nobody is doing much with the mum ...'.*

*'So, it's about do we take on that parenting role, because it does get a bit frustrating when you know that there are problems at home to do with behaviour that could probably – but it's time again - sit down and put little parenting things together and work with mum and the child about firm boundaries – d'you know, the whole parenting stuff - but that's not what my remit is. My remit is to work with children,*

*and if I cross over into the mum's it all becomes a bit fuzzy and it's frustrating' (children's worker).*

5.14 For her a solution would be as follows to allow her job to include support to the mum as well as to the child. This needs to be weighed up with the value children place on having an identified worker of their own.

**Practice example:**

While most services state that a children's worker's role is to work with children, not families, a few services reported that they had begun to offer family support where this had been identified as a need:

*'So it will be setting up bedtime routines, mealtime routines... It's just helping them with aspects of parenting that they're maybe struggling with ... and building up that positive relationship between mum and child as well' (children's worker).*

**Case example:**

The children's worker had identified that there was a need to tackle problems within the family, particularly issues around mum's parenting skills:

*'It's always been a family issue – the bottom line is it's always been a family issue. And then you saw the children individually, you saw the children on their own, and they really didn't have that big a problem. It's when they go back into the home. Their mum is the one with the biggest problem so that's where it became very problematic' (children's worker).*

She had held a family meeting with the children, their mum, herself and the outreach worker who was working with mum, to see what they could do for the family as a whole rather than considering only what support she could give to the children individually.

**Summary and Recommendation: Children's support worker and parents support**

<i>Summary</i>	Some children's workers identified benefits to providing support to mothers on parenting and relationships alongside support to children; this may produce better outcomes for children. This needs to be weighed against the importance young people place on having a worker they identify as theirs who is separate from their mother.
<i>Recommendation</i>	See recommendation 11

**The availability of one to one support services**

5.15 The Fund aimed to enable increased provision of one to one support for children and young people who wanted it. In every service contacted, staff reported that all children and young people have access to an individual service. Case studies confirm this. In questionnaire returns, 133 (more than 90%) of older children reported spending some time alone with their children support worker and this was valued.

5.16 There were a few exceptions. A few mothers reported that some children seemed only able to see their children's worker when and if they attended the weekly group session; they did not have individual sessions with her. A brother and sister reported that they did not get a one to one service, but told us they would be able to speak to a children's worker privately, during the group they attended each week, if they wanted to. A few young people

reported that they would have preferred to have individual sessions with their sibling rather than on their own.

5.17 In general, the majority of children in contact with Women's Aid are able to identify and spend time alone with their own worker.

**Summary and Recommendation: One to one support for children and young people:**

<i>Summary</i>	In every service contacted, staff reported that all children and young people have access to a one to one service if they want one. The case studies confirm this. In questionnaire returns, more than 90% of children report spending some time alone with their children support worker and this was valued.
<i>Recommendation 13</i>	Women's Aid children's support workers should continue to provide one to one support: this is valued by children.

**Provision of group-work service**

5.18 The Fund has enabled an appropriate expansion of the group-work service. It seems to be working well and is appreciated by children, young people, their mothers and partner organisations.

5.19 Not all children accessed a group-work service. However, not all children wanted one, nor was it appropriate to offer one in all circumstances. There are a few instances where group-work was not offered for practical reasons. The provision of group-work varied across projects, and differed by category of work and implications of providing it in rural rather than urban areas. In some services all children and young people were able to access a group-work service, in others, group-work was only available to children and young people receiving a service in refuge and/or follow on. Some services only run groups during school holidays, and some only in the summer holidays. These groups appear to concentrate on providing trips or activities for children and young people, rather than offering support of a more therapeutic nature.

***Young people's and mothers' views of group-work***

5.20 The majority of case study children and young people had access to some form of group-work and many of them valued this form of support. Young people frequently reported that the activities and trips were fun and enabled them to meet new friends. Some felt it was good to be able to meet other young people who had been through similar experiences. Others said this was not important to them.

5.21 Some mothers felt that group-work was beneficial because it enabled their children to meet other young people in similar situations and enabled them to do activities or go on trips that they would not otherwise be able to afford for them to do.

5.22 There were a few criticisms. These mainly related to age appropriateness. For example, one mother told us there was sometimes too many people at groups and they could be noisy. She said her children would be more likely to attend groups if transport was provided. Another said that children were only able to attend groups when they were living

in the refuge; once families move out children cannot access the groups - the children's workers just go into school to see how young people are getting on.

5.23 There were also geographical considerations. A grandmother told us her grand daughter could attend a group if they lived nearer the town where the service was located. She said she thought her granddaughter would benefit from being able to talk to other young people who had been through the same things.

### ***Staff views of group-work***

5.24 Staff reported that group-work can work well, particularly in refuge where children already know each other, or in follow on where they are able to meet up again with children who they lived with in refuge.

5.25 Participation in a group does not work for all children and some children and young people do not want to attend group sessions, for example, one children's worker told us:

*'... we see children when we get a referral and we then do one to-one sessions with them throughout the year, the academic year. And then in the holidays we bring the children together to do group-work and we have found a probably significant number of those children chose not to because of confidentiality so because we're condensed in one area, they would know them'(children's worker).*

5.26 One children's worker suggested a peer support group might be useful:

*' It would be quite good to see maybe groups set up where you're encouraging kids that maybe experienced this before to go down and talk about issues; that would be quite good. Again, you know, depending on if kids feel kind of comfortable or confident to speak out about their experiences; it would be quite good to see a peer group like that' (children's worker).*

5.27 With regard to outreach work in school, one worker said that doing group-work was impractical because it was difficult to run groups in school and during school hours.

5.28 Some services also mentioned geographical difficulties. Some groups only provide one to one services for children in outreach because it is too difficult to set up groups when children and young people are spread out geographically in rural and island authorities. Some services reported that having to pay for taxis to bring young people to groups could be a problem.

### **Summary and Recommendation: Access to group-work**

<i>Summary</i>	The Fund has enabled an appropriate expansion of the group-work service. In general it seems to be working well and is appreciated by children, young people, their mothers and partner organisations. Some barriers to further expansion of the group-work service were raised. These included that group-work needs to be developed flexibly and according to need – it does not suit all young people in all circumstances. There were a few examples of group-work not being offered because of practical reasons, for example; in rural areas families are spread over wide areas. Where there is funding for
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	transport, uptake is better; this is not always available.
<i>Recommendation</i>	See recommendation 6

### **All children and young people have a key worker**

5.29 One objective of the Fund was to use a key worker approach to service provision. This aim has been largely met. From the templates 35 projects returned figures about the allocation of key workers:

- 95% of reporting projects had allocated each young person a key worker; a few (3) had allocated key workers to fewer than half of children
- In most cases the key worker was allocated soon after young people were admitted to refuge
- In a minority of projects staff shortage explained difficulties in allocating a key worker
- Some projects noted some children and young people had had more than one key worker.

5.30 Services contacted for the evaluation reported that all children and young people have a key worker and that a key worker is allocated as soon as a child comes into the service. With the exception of one set of siblings, all case study children and young people reported that they have, or did have, a key worker and knew who this was.

5.31 Most of the case study children and young people had always had the same children's worker but a few had experienced a change of worker when a worker had left, or when they had moved out of refuge and follow on support was provided by a different worker. Where children and young people had experienced a change of worker they and their mothers reported that this had not been a problem. In one service where children were assigned a different children's worker when they moved out of refuge the children's worker explained how the handover had been managed. She explained that she had taken the two boys back to the play flat in the refuge for the first few sessions after they had moved out of refuge, because it was a familiar environment to them.

### **Summary and Recommendation: Key workers**

<i>Summary</i>	The key worker system seems to be working well with children allocated a key worker as soon as they come into the service. Children are aware they have a key worker or a worker for them. Where there needs to be a handover of worker this seems to be being handled carefully and well.
<i>Recommendation</i>	No action.

### **Provision of age appropriate services**

5.32 Service staff reported that they provide a wide range of age appropriate services. The Fund has enabled this to be enhanced. There were some limits to this. One children's worker told us that many of the available resources were more appropriate for older children than younger children:

*'... I think a lot of our resources are geared for the older ones. I mean we do have a playhouse, we do have puppets, we do have, like, a medical box. We have lots of things downstairs but I find personally our younger ones, like the three or four year olds, because of their grasp of understanding, is more limited than our older ones' (children's worker).*

### **Practice examples:**

Some children's workers told us about ways in which they effectively managed to work with younger children:

*'...younger kids or kids that actually don't recognise that abuse has taken place ... what we do then is I speak to mums and say to them 'you know, the children don't actually understand the term abuse, is it ok to do a session explaining to them what abuse is and why you've maybe left home'; one of the questions on the support plan is "do you know why you're in refuge" and some kids maybe, you know, just say "well mum and dad didn't get on, mum and dad argued" and from then I can go on to do the whole, you know, what abuse is, the effects of it as well' (children's worker).*

*'I use quite a lot, especially with younger children, I've got cards that I use which say things like 'when I get angry I ...' and they have to finish the sentence or 'my favourite room in the house is ... ' or '3 things I would change at home are ...' and it's quite an easy way of getting them to talk without them really realising that they're talking' (children's worker).*

5.33 A number of young people and mothers commented that groups were not always age appropriate. One mother suggested that the different age groups should be separated to enable age appropriate activities, because older young people sometimes spoil things for the younger ones, for example, if they were doing soft play. Another mum also felt there should be different groups for different age groups, commenting that there were not enough resources for older young people:

*'.... There's a big difference to get something to please a child of four or five, as somebody who is maybe 14 ... My kids, especially [one of her daughters] did sort of say 'mum it's alright, the people are alright, but it's too childish', and she was like 13 and I had to explain to her 'look some kids are about seven' and it's very difficult in any group to strike a balance. ... But I think that's a major stumbling block ... [her daughter] would say 'I don't want to go today Mum because I don't want to sit there and draw a hand or picture or something you know with a four year old' (mum).*

5.34 In some areas outreach services are often focused on secondary school age children; outreach workers rarely work with preschool children. Reasons for this are likely to include that if domestic abuse is a concern for women with pre school age children support is more likely to be provided directly to women. Reasons given for working in secondary rather than primary schools included that secondary schools have Personal and Social Education classes (PSE). Also, both Women's Aid groups and schools are more comfortable with children and young people receiving support without parental consent if they are 12 or over. Where groups have tried to pursue working in primary schools, it is difficult to get permission for this.

### **Summary and Recommendation: Age appropriate activities**

Summary	A wide range of age appropriate services are provided across all categories of service. The Fund has contributed to this being possible. Some gaps remain.
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<i>Recommendation 14</i>	In providing a group-work service, Women's Aid projects should consider, where possible, ensuring they contain similar age children; that there are age appropriate activities for younger and older children; and for boys in particular.
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## Assessment of needs and risk

5.35 Services report that they carry out needs and risk assessments. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the service, safety was identified as a priority issue when assessing the needs of a child or young person. Staff reported they used a range of mechanisms and materials to do this:

*'... we've got like a lot of story books that we use; about a character that sometimes feels scared and different situations in which they feel scared; it's very child friendly and then at the end, they can choose to colour somebody in and you know the difference in colour charts, so blue is worried, so they colour in a part in blue, or green is scared you know so they use those colours like blue or green or something which might mean I'm worried, I'm scared then you can explore it further with them through that so it's just lots of really child friendly resources' (children's worker).*

5.36 The majority of children who receive an outreach service are still living at home and safety is a key factor in assessing their needs:

*'... we would suppose the threat to follow-on children would be less and they would have been removed from the environment; with outreach a lot of the work is about how do they cope and deal with the situation when they are still living with it so I suppose in terms of identifying risk, for most of the young people that we see it's kind of a given that they are living in an environment which is not safe' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

5.37 One children's worker explained how young people are encouraged to keep safe:

*'For some young people their mum doesn't know we see them. Mum isn't always ready to come in but we encourage young people to have a code with Mum so that young people know when to phone the police when Mum uses the code' (children's worker).*

*'We have used touching circles, looking at who is within their lives, and how is that changing. One of the things we done at the group is we kind of developed the touching circle into a spiders web, so it started off with everybody getting to know each other, and this was done at both the younger and the older group, and then this was all stuck down on big piece of paper, put up on the wall, and everybody had a picture that they chose that represented them. This was stuck in the centre, and as they made new friends they were able to put the stickers around their name ... and they would take actually great pleasure in saying well I need to stick a picture on because I have made a new friend this week, you know, and picking that persons icon and putting it beside theirs, and they were always very proud. So what we started off with just a couple of stickers, by the end was totally covered in stickers because they all had everybody around each other' (children's worker).*

5.38 Some children's workers mentioned that they used different resources such as toolkits and worksheets around self esteem and relationships to assess needs and risk:

*'We've got feelings trees and what that does is the child says where they are on that tree. They might be right at the bottom working their way back up again so what happens is that, depending on where they start, and then we'd go on a bit and then they would kind of work their way up that tree so it very much depends on what comes out of the support plan. The support plan is the main assessment and then what we do is from that support plan we would use those aids like trees and anything else that we might find useful like some of the books actually that we've got' (children's worker).*

5.39 Another children's worker explained that using tools can be difficult if you are meeting a young person in a public place:

*'I see her at lunchtime so I take her for her lunch. And it's not easy to sit in a café in the middle of [name of town], you kind of have to watch because there's other folk around as well. So I haven't done worksheets or anything with her for a long time' (children's worker).*

5.40 Some children's workers reported that young people are not always comfortable speaking about domestic abuse until they have been working with them for a considerable amount of time:

*'Some of the kids are definitely quite guarded, I would say particularly the ones that are outreach rather than ones that are in refuge. The ones that are in refuge are I would say are more willing to open up' (children's worker).*

5.41 One children's worker told us it was really important to ensure the young person felt comfortable when they left the session, particularly if they had been seen at school and had to go back into the classroom afterwards:

*'... And I think it's very, very important that, before you let them back into the big wide world again, that they are emotionally stable to go back. Like some people I see at schools and they come out of their class, they get permission to come out of their class, and we have our time together. And I always feel it's so important to make sure that person is able to go back into a classroom setting after speaking about some deep and meaningful things' (children's worker).*

5.42 One worker explained how she built up trust:

*'I split my sessions with the children, I try to do a half activity based and half maybe the worksheets and stuff, and I found that that's worked for me. It's a slow process but then I find that then the children end up trusting you, and they are coming in looking forward to what they want to do, and then they fill out the worksheets and they are chatting away to you, and you are maybe once you have done the worksheet they are maybe then going onto the activity and they will chose to speak to you more and stuff like that. So I find it's a good way of working' (children's worker).*

5.43 One children's worker said that it was particularly difficult to get boys to talk and commented that many of the tools and worksheets were ineffective when working with boys:

*‘...You need to find different approaches to use with different kids because one thing doesn’t fit all children. Particularly, I’ve found little boys hate doing any kind of work sheets because they just see it as ‘God, do I have to write something?’ So I’ll just take in Connects if it’s little boys. I would just make cards or things with Connects and talk at the same time so there’s no record of that. I’ll just come back and say that we’ve played with Connects and spoke because there’s no point in getting them to do something that you can tell by their face or by how they’re doing that they’re bored or they don’t like it or they view it as just like being at school ... You can’t fire questions at kids, you have to find ways of kind of building up relationships. It’s difficult for kids to talk and, in particular, wee boys aren’t very good about talking about how they feel. Most wee girls like doing the work sheets and they can sit and talk about themselves until the cows come home but wee boys find that hard’ (children’s worker).*

5.44 Often other agencies were involved at the assessment stage, particularly if they had referred a child. Some participants felt it was useful to involve other agencies to ensure the support being provided was not duplicated:

*‘A lot of young people have social workers who are part of the case. There’s a lot of multi agency working. Inter agency relationships are good so we know who’s working with the young person. We have consultations with CAMHS [Child and Mental Health Service]. The waiting list for services is long but we can have a consultation with them. Everyone who’s working with the young person will attend to see whether they need to make a referral and to see how they can work with them in the meantime. If a young person isn’t attending school everyone meets together to discuss the situation. If social work are involved there are case conferences and children’s hearings and things to attend (children’s worker).’*

5.45 The assessment process varied greatly from project to project and in most services was relatively unstructured and informal, mainly involving talking to the child or young person and finding out what they want from the service.

### **Summary and Recommendation: Assessment of needs and risk**

<i>Summary</i>	Staff are involved in an ongoing process of assessing the needs of and risks to children. The issue of safety is always high on the agenda. Tools and mechanisms for conducting assessments vary across projects; in most the process is relatively unstructured and informal.
<i>Recommendation 15</i>	Women’s Aid projects might consider adopting more formal processes for assessing risk to children.

### **Support plans**

5.46 All of the case study children and young people were aware they had a support plan and involved in the process of developing it. Two siblings who were receiving a service were unaware they had a plan. Examples of how workers designed support plans are outlined below:

*‘Obviously, the first couple of times that I would meet with the kids, I would be carrying out some sort of assessment and then looking at you know a support plan; they would definitely be involved in that, getting information from them, what it is they feel they need support with if anything; you know what they feel they want to*

*change and then looking at ways of bringing that about, giving them options as well about what it is you actually want to do today, you know simple things like that, do you want to use Opinion Zone or do you want to do worksheets or do you not want to do any of that? very much be offering them you know choices and whatever, decisions whether it's just basic ones about are we going to a café today or if we are going, you know ...they are very much involved' (children's worker).*

**Case example 1:**

The children's worker told us the support plans of the two girls she works with cover their hobbies, wants, aspirations, emotional issues, physical issues, sexual issues, hopes and fears, what they know about abuse and why they are in refuge. She explained that the girls had set their own targets relating to emotional and physical issues:

*'Targets which I know [young person] has set was to get her into a dance class or a singing class - she's really interested in those; fitness as well, we've managed to meet some of them; she's actually going to a fitness class on a Monday night now after school .... She wants to go and enrol with a dentist. She hasn't been to a dentist for over a year. We've managed to set an appointment up for the whole family for next week ... Emotional issues obviously that was to get help from the counsellor; just a lot of anxieties about the court case that's going to be coming up which we've actually got a date now so that kind of puts a lot of pressure on the girls. And again, as I say, that will be reviewed every three months and then you can set more targets as well' (children's worker).*

5.47 Practice varies in the extent to which workers involved mothers in the development of support plans for their children. Most children's workers reported that they do involve mothers in developing the package of support for the child or young person, particularly if the child is younger.

5.48 With regard to outreach, practice varies in relation to the extent to which mothers are informed their child is receiving a service. One service always contacted mothers where a child was under 14, and would ideally try and contact mothers where a child was over 14. This was not always the case in other services.

5.49 Many Women's Aid groups are committed to the importance of providing a confidential service to children and young people in their own right, although practice in relation to this did vary. Some workers told us they would not show mothers a child's support plan, or even tell them their child had a support plan. Other workers reported that mothers and young people can see support plans if they want to. One always tells young people and mothers that they can look at support plans when she starts working with them. She said a few teenagers had asked to do this and had read their notes but mothers had never asked.

5.50 One mum reported her daughter did not have a support plan because she was only one; but the children's worker confirmed she did have one. In one service mums were aware their children had a support plan:

*'I was told he had a support plan and if ever I wanted to query it or look at it or whatever I was free to do so, or if I thought something should be added. So to be honest I can't remember what it looks like now, I was shown it at the beginning and explained how that would work' (mum).*

5.51 With regard to monitoring and overseeing support plans, practice also varies across projects. In some services the co-ordinator or manager monitors support plans on a regular basis. In other services children's workers monitor their own plans.

5.52 Children's workers reported that young people are involved in reviewing their support plans:

*'... at the end of the support plan we set targets. Some of the younger kids are not too sure of what targets to set. One of the older kids, it may be they want to get emotional help maybe with the abuse that they've suffered in the past. It can be simple things like they want to join a group, build up their self confidence, making friends, just simple things like to enrol in a dentist, and these are all reviewed after maybe, say three months, and we'll see what kind of progress we've made, if we've managed to achieve any of the targets' (children's worker).*

5.53 There is evidence of ongoing planning and planning processes to meet the needs of individual young people. Some case examples are provided below:

**Case example 1:**

The children's worker explained that she had used a number of tools to assess need and had then planned a programme of support for a ten year old boy:

*'So my first session was a 'my world' activity and it's a creative one. And in the, like, you draw a big circle, and basically he gets all this pens and stuff to do, what's important to him and his world. So we did that as a kind of 'getting to know you' type thing. We've done, together we did a 'feelings' worksheet. It was like three different feelings. And anything that creates these feelings for him. We did 'Windows to our Emotions'. This is all like colouring, painting and stuff ... it's a big sheet of paper and it's divided into four window panes. And he can choose any emotion he wants and he draws a picture relating to that emotion. Because they were moving house, we did a session on 'all about my house' (children's worker).*

The young person had also experienced bullying so she said she did some work around that and read him Dinosaur Divorce so he could understand divorce and the different effects it can have on people.

**Case example 2:**

The children's worker told us the young person's behaviour had been the dominant issue so she had used a six week anger management programme called 'Volcano in my Tummy'. She said she also did life story work to see if he wanted to talk about anything that had gone on in his past but he had not wanted to do this.

5.54 Children's support workers build plans around and balance sometimes conflicting views of what a child feels they need from the service and what a mum feels their children need:

*'It is very difficult because you are looking for what the child can get out of it. And Mum is looking for what she can get out of the whole thing. I feel that mum is sometimes looking for somebody to child-mind the child' (Women's Aid services co-ordinator).*

5.55 This is borne out by some of the comments from mothers who attended the mothers' stakeholder focus group who reported they wanted more practical help in the form of

childcare, particularly if they had to go into hospital or had to visit solicitors; advice on free school meals and grants for school uniforms, and help finding nurseries and schools.

## Case recording

5.56 In all services every child has their own file which is kept in a locked cabinet with session reports written up and kept in the child's file after each contact. Individual case files were not shared with the research team. However, information from project staff about case recording suggests there is some variation across services in terms of how much information is recorded. Some services reported recording a lot of information:

*'We try and record as much as we can ... It's so that we can refer back to it when we're in the next session and it's also if we have any issues and it's also to see what sessions we've done and it's also so that we can feed into this massive template that we have to fill in as well; but every key work session, every one to one session, every group-work session, we write things down about what's been done, how the child reacted, whether there were any issues....and what we also do is if there are any particular issues or anything that's come out, the children's worker writes that up in a very summary form and it goes in the mums' files so that the women's workers can be kind of aware; but it's not the detailed stuff that goes in there; it's only a very brief summary so that we are working together rather than " I didn't know that" or "I didn't know that" or "I didn't know that I didn't need to do that' (children's worker).*

5.57 In contrast, another service told us they did not record much information, just main issues, *'factual information rather than judgements'*.

5.58 There was variation across projects about who is able to access records. There was some variation and lack of clarity about procedures to be followed if asked to provide written information from files for another agency. Most reported that they had never been asked to do this; they had only been asked to provide verbal information over the phone.

## Summary and Recommendation: Support plans and case recording

<i>Summary</i>	Support plans were widely used by workers. Children are involved in developing them. Some mothers did not know that their children had a support plan.
<i>Recommendation 16</i>	There may be merit in reviewing the use of support plans across Women's Aid groups. A more standard approach to case review processes should also be considered.

## Recording templates

5.59 There were mixed views about the usefulness of the recording templates for the Children's Services Women's Aid Fund. The main criticism was that they were very time consuming to complete and contained too much detail. Most however, felt that the new shorter version of the template had removed some duplication and was easier to complete. Some mentioned that they had been useful in enabling projects to reflect on their practice.

5.60 There was criticism that the forms did not enable:

*'an overview of where you're good and where you're bad. They don't encourage you to think of new innovative ways of doing things because you have to narrow down your views to fit the form' (children's worker).*

5.61 Some queried the helpfulness of some of the measures used:

*'Some of the questions are quite ambiguous and vague and quite hard to answer ... I'm trying to think of some of the questions... just like what percentage of children understood domestic abuse ... how can you measure that? ...And it is time consuming to go back and collect all your stats and stuff and it doesn't always represent it. It might sound quite low the figures for the number of children you're working with but actually the intensity of that is just not collected through stats and things' (Women's Aid services co-ordinator).*

5.62 Some services commented that the way the forms were split between outreach, refuge and follow on was not always applicable because some of the questions did not apply to some parts of the service, for example, because outreach was a new service there may be significant change to report; whereas within a six month period there could be little change in other parts of the service. Many suggested that annual reporting would be preferable:

*'...for outreach there can be a lot of changes within six months which she can report back on; within refuge as I say because there's not a lot of turnover of houses, women can be in refuge for up to a year, even longer; so my kids might not change and there's not a lot that I can feed back on' (outreach worker).*

### **Summary and Recommendation: Recording templates and base line data**

<i>Summary</i>	There were mixed views about the usefulness of the recording templates for the Scottish Government Fund. The main criticism was that they were very time consuming to complete and contained too much detail. Most however, felt that the new shorter version of the template had removed some duplication and was easier to complete. Some mentioned that they had been useful in enabling projects to reflect on their practice.
<i>Recommendation</i>	See recommendation 2

### **Increased opportunities for children to build support networks**

5.63 One of the aims of the Fund was to ensure opportunities for children to build support networks. Children's workers told us that encouraging young people to build support networks is a key part of the support plan. There were many examples provided of this in practice.

5.64 Children's workers explained how they went about helping young people build support networks. Sometimes they were offered a service where they could access peer support from other young people who had experienced domestic abuse. This was seen as important first step towards building support networks:

*'...part of their support plan is that they ask what their hobbies are think about what activities they might want to do ... that was one of the aims of the children's group, to make a stepping stone for them to get social interaction and then so they would become more confident joining an outside community group. That's our next step you*

*know, we try and get them out into the community that they are in' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

5.65 They are also encouraged to build support networks outside Women's Aid:

*'But it's also about looking at what else is out there in terms of encouraging the child to participate in things that they might not normally participate in....after-school clubs, lots of other things that are going on ... there's load of stuff that's going on locally and again I don't know about everything but it is about encouragement and actually reassurance as well saying to the child - you can - because some kids won't do it because they don't feel they've got the ability to join anything so it's about reassuring them ... It could be just a youth group or something like that' (children's worker).*

5.66 One Children's Support worker told us about a boy who had wanted to play in a football team but whose dad had not let him do this. This became one of the personal goals in his support plan and he achieved this within three months of moving to his new house, even though his mum had been worried about him travelling on his own to get there.

**Practice example:**

One mother said her son had become very interested in photography, film making and model making as a result of the work he had done with the children's worker and would certainly continue these interests when he moved out of the refuge:

*'The photography project, that went really well, that went on for four or five weeks ... about a month after the project ended they all went through to [town] and showed their photographs about how they were feeling and things relating to their situation and other things, what they thought about drugs and what they thought about relationships and things like that. And all the kids had a collage of all the photographs they had taken and they had things blown up and sort of stage set, and got gifted a very expensive camera each. That project worked really well, that's what really has gotten [name of child] interested in photography; and he uses that camera that he was gifted on a regular basis' (mum).*

5.67 Lack of money could be a constraint when thinking about what activities a young person might get involved in. One service reported that the local authority often provides free leisure passes to refugees. This was of considerable help to families.

5.68 Despite strenuous efforts being made by many staff to ensure children were able to sustain and build social networks, a few children and young people and their mothers reported that for young people in refugees, not being able to have friends to visit made this difficult. In some areas where there was a shortage of accommodation and where families may be living in a refuge for up to two years this could be a real difficulty. One mum told us:

*'They can't get their friends in or I cannae get family visiting. My mum can't even come over to see me or anything' (mum).*

Her daughters told us they were desperate to get their own house so they could have their friends over. This was the main concern they wanted to highlight when we spoke to them and their teacher confirmed they were desperate to move out of refuge.



5.69 From interviews with young people, the issue of how stigmatising it was to have experienced domestic abuse was mentioned. This could be a major barrier sustaining social networks. Several of the children mentioned how stigmatising it was to see the support worker in school and of the fear of the impact of this on friends. In several cases the children's support worker did not know about this. One girl explained that because the children's worker visited her in school her friends questioned her about why she kept disappearing and where she had been. One young person told us she had to tell her friends at school that the children's worker was her aunt because she did not want them to know she was getting support:

*'...if anybody asks me, I say it's my auntie [name of children's worker], she works at Women's Aid and she's my Auntie' (young person).*

### **Summary and Recommendation: Support networks**

<i>Summary</i>	<p>Staff view supporting children and helping them maintain and build social networks as an important part of their job. There are examples of strenuous efforts being made to support young people in this. There are also examples of how difficult it is to provide support to children and young people but in ways where they do not feel stigmatised about having experienced domestic abuse.</p> <p>Rules about being able to have friends in refuge are particularly difficult for children trying to maintain and build friendships.</p> <p>Some children had sensitivities about support being provided in school.</p>
<i>Recommendation 17</i>	<p>Children's support workers should take care to ensure that meetings with children are in places where children feel comfortable and do not feel stigmatised, finding creative ways enable young people to maintain old friendships where possible and to build new social networks where this is needed.</p>

## **AIM 3:- EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT, DELIVERY OF KEY PROCESSES, PRACTICE STANDARDS**

### **6. AIM 3:- MANAGEMENT, DELIVERY OF KEY PROCESSES, PRACTICE STANDARDS**

#### **Introduction**

6.1 Findings for this section of the report relate to the third stated aim to ensure effective management, delivery of practice standards, with specific objectives to: ensure services are registered and inspected by the Care Commission; recruit workers with appropriate skills and knowledge; ensure staff trained in line with SSSC requirements; and take account of the Protecting Children Framework for Standards.

6.2 Evidence for this was collated from service effectiveness interviews, interviews with co-ordinators, stakeholder interviews with children's support workers and partner organisations, case study interviews with children's support workers, stakeholder interviews with children's services planners and partner organisations.

#### **Operational management arrangements**

6.3 Half of the services in the 10 sample projects had a management structure in place; the other half operated as a collective where all staff were responsible for all aspects of the service. Several of the collectives were in the process of restructuring to a management structure. Some children's workers reported benefits to working in a collective, others identified this as a challenge.

6.4 One service told us they operated as a collective where no-one was in overall control but within the collective staff had different responsibilities. For example, one person was the treasurer and dealt with financial issues, one dealt with the Care Commission, one co-ordinated the children's service:

*'Collective working has been a challenge but we are restructuring which will help the organisation move on. It's been difficult. When everyone is on the same level it's difficult to go to someone with any problems or difficulties you might have. It will be better with the new structure' (children's worker).*

6.5 In the services which operate collectively different arrangements exist for staff support and supervision. In some cases children's workers provided each other with peer support – there was no supervision structure. In some cases workers reported that they would have preferred more support and for support to be more structured:

*'We don't have official support provision in the organisation at the moment. That is a real ... it is peer support supervision and subject support supervision which I just think, in this particular job is not good enough ... I have been tempted to outsource, to get my self support provision because I think when you are doing direct work with children and young people for an hour at a time it is really quite, sometimes quite intense. I really think we need proper support and supervision. Proper qualified*

*support and supervisors. Not just a team leader that you can off-load to but somebody who can actually guide you in the work that you do' (children's worker).*

*'I think that is hugely important. But the problem is there is not money for that. I just think that is so important ... There are some young people who come along and they open up and they talk and it works and it is great. But you can sometimes get stuck with a young person and at that point I think support and supervision is essential. It is just so essential. I am lucky that I have got great colleagues and great co-workers in the children's sub but you shouldn't have to depend on that really. I think it should be more formalised' (children's worker).*

6.6 In yet other services which run collectively all children's support workers receive some form of internal or external supervision. In one of these services there is a children's co-ordinator and children's workers receive both internal supervision from the co-ordinator and external supervision from a qualified therapist.

6.7 In services with a management structure children's workers receive formal supervision every month or every six or eight weeks but said they could access support in between supervision sessions if necessary. One children's worker received internal supervision from her line manager but said she also accessed confidential, if informal guidance and support from people she knows within the social work department:

*'I've got other professionals that are there that I feel able to talk to and say 'what do you think I should do here?' That's where I would get my guidance' (children's worker)*

6.8 Some Local Authority partners mentioned there may be benefits to them of Women's Aid adopting a line management organisational structure. One local authority had worked with the Women's Aid group to assist them streamline administrative processes. Another local authority partner suggested that having specialist staff to negotiate budgets, business planning, deal with finance and drive service development may be an advantage.

6.9 Children's support workers seemed to spend an appropriate balance of time on direct work with children and administration. Asked to estimate the amount of time spent on direct work with children they reported spending between half and 90% of their time on this. Travel, completing reporting templates and writing funding applications were mentioned as particularly time consuming:

*'It would be so much better if we could just be monitored in one go; you know, we are repeating ourselves quite a lot in different ways and also in different meetings with different people saying the same thing. And the same people have to go because the Scottish Government want to meet with the whole of the service so even workers who are funded through say Childcare Strategy which is also the government but is a different strand have to come sometimes to meetings with say the Local Authority but also have to go meetings with Childcare so I think it would be really helpful if that was streamlined. And they said it would be' (children's worker).*

### **Summary and Recommendation: Management and supervision**

Summary	The Fund has enabled the strengthening of operational management arrangements within Women's Aid. Services generally report adequate structures in place to manage and support staff working with vulnerable children and young people. This operates differently
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	across projects and, is informally organised in some. Children's support workers spend an appropriate balance of time on direct work with children and administration. Travel, completing reporting templates and writing funding applications were identified as barriers to time spent working with children.
<i>Recommendation 18</i>	More formal support and supervision arrangements should be introduced in those Women's Aid projects where this is informally organised.
<i>Recommendation 19</i>	Women's Aid groups may wish to consider streamlining and sharing administrative processes; including having specialist staff to negotiate budgets, deal with finance, be involved in business planning, and drive service development.

## **Funding arrangements**

6.10 While the fund has enabled recommended levels to be achieved for the time of the funding arrangements, the future of funding for services at this level is uncertain. In the interests of ensuring continuity of service at current levels, all partners should engage in planning for this now.

6.11 In some cases, the Fund enabled relatively rapid deployment of new staff and service development. This seems to have created some issues around differentials in terms and conditions for some staff doing essentially the same job, both between staff in different projects, but also for some staff working in the same project.

### **Summary and Recommendation: Funding**

<i>Summary</i>	While the Fund has enabled some stability of funding for posts for three years, some posts remain uncertainly funded in the short term. There are inconsistencies across services with some workers doing similar jobs but with different terms and conditions.
<i>Recommendation 20</i>	Inconsistencies across Women's Aid children's services, where workers are doing similar jobs with different terms and conditions, should be addressed.
<i>Recommendation</i>	See recommendation 1

## **Services registered and inspected by the Care Commission; and practice standards**

6.12 One of the aims of the Fund was to ensure that Women's Aid Services to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse meet recommended practice standards including working with the Care Commission to establish if services should be registered and regulated under the terms of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. On the whole projects seemed to have met or are making good progress towards meeting these. The majority of projects funded under the scheme were registered or were in the process of seeking registration with the Care Commission.

6.13 Many of the projects had been registered with the Care Commission prior to the Fund. Where an inspection had been conducted, projects were asked to include a copy of inspection reports with the reporting templates. On the whole these were positive with few requirements. Recommendations tended to be around ensuring recruitment procedures and guidance in keeping with good practice; projects were doing or attempting to do this.

6.14 Care Commission registration is somewhat complicated for Women's Aid children's services. Most refuges are registered and inspected by the Care Commission but they tend to be registered as housing or as day care providers. Follow-on and outreach can be registered in different ways depending on where the support is provided. If it is provided in school then it is not registered - outreach services are often not registered. Most services are registered as providers of housing support and not as providers of children's services – reflecting the traditional adult focussed nature of services. The fact that some services were registered with the Care Commission as housing providers and not as providers of children's services was causing some problems in relation to registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). This situation is currently in flux with Scottish Women's Aid currently actively liaising with SSSC and the Care Commission to identify a solution.

6.15 From the templates, projects were clearly working to meet SSSC requirements; 18 projects had children's support workers meeting SSSC qualification requirements for registration in 2008; in a further 17 projects at least one member of staff met minimum requirements. In one project, no staff met these requirements but this was being addressed. Some projects reported that staff were unable to obtain qualification due to shortage of funding.

6.16 All reporting projects said they had appropriate policies and procedures in place for each registration category: this included child protection policy and recruitment materials (as per Care Commission Requirements or Scottish Women's Aid good practice).

### **Summary and Recommendation: Care Commission registration**

<i>Summary</i>	The majority of projects funded under the scheme were registered or were seeking registration with the Care Commission. Most refuges are registered and inspected by the Care Commission but they tend to be registered as housing or as day care providers. Criteria for registration are complex and groups have received considerable support from Scottish Women's Aid to support registration. Different decisions about the form registration should take have been made.
<i>Recommendation 21</i>	Given the expansion of children's services within Women's Aid, it may be timely to review current terms of registration with the Care Commission.

### **Skills, qualifications and experience**

6.17 Currently staff have a range of skills experience and qualifications. There is no single job description for the post. Children's workers interviewed for the case studies had a wide variety of previous experience and formal qualifications. This included working with children and young people:

- In the voluntary or statutory sector

- In early years settings, e.g. nurseries, and family centres
- In youth work
- In residential care
- In addictions work
- In sexual health
- In call centres and helplines
- In Respite centre for children with disabilities
- As classroom assistant
- In other domestic abuse projects.

All had a formal qualification of some kind; ranging from HNCs to post graduate level qualifications:

- Several had degrees - in social policy, community studies, childhood and youth studies, psychiatric nursing, psychology, community education and fine art
- Three had post graduate qualifications - one in community education, one in counselling and one in psychotherapy
- Some were undertaking further qualifications whilst in post, for example, one worker was doing a degree in play therapy.

6.18 When asked what skills and knowledge would be expected of a children's worker coordinators and children's workers mentioned the following criteria:

- Previous experience of working with children and young people
- Experience of working with vulnerable children and young people
- Relevant qualifications, e.g. HNC in Social Care; SVQ; Diploma in Social Work; qualifications in community education, social work, psychotherapy
- Certificate in counselling and psychotherapy
- Experience of working with domestic abuse
- Knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse
- Knowledge of the feminist analysis of domestic abuse
- Experience of supporting children through crisis
- Knowledge of child protection issues
- Experience of working with different age groups
- Cultural knowledge and knowledge of cultural and religious practices
- Community language skills
- Experience of working with children and young people from different ethnic backgrounds.

6.19 Some services told us that understanding of domestic abuse and/or experience of working with children was more important than formal qualifications:

*'As an organisation we particularly, we favour people with experience over sort of just qualifications, so if people have experience of working with Women's Aid or*

*working in domestic abuse or have been working in a project working with children but maybe just have an SVQ level qualification then they're going to get the job over someone that has a degree with no experience because it's really important to have worked with children ... that's one of the things that's needed, particularly if they've got experience with vulnerable children and young people' (children's worker).*

6.20 Others felt that this emphasis on experience was changing as minimum requirements were now required for registration. Some felt qualifications were important. One service had asked for a certificate in counselling or psychotherapy as a minimum requirement for a children's post. Another children's worker felt she required more training in therapeutic work in order to do some of the more complex work:

*'I think a lot of work that you need to be doing with the kids is more sort of therapeutic type work that I might not be the best to... I'm not a psychologist, you know what I mean and a lot of the work I think, if there was some sort of training out there that would be able to sort of offer you, you know, ways of working the now or sometimes you feel like you're sort of having to just find yourself' (children's worker).*

6.21 Local authority partners interviewed were aware that children's support workers came from a range of backgrounds; that most had a relevant qualification; that where they were not qualified, or were under-qualified they were working toward minimum standards for (SSSC) registration.

6.22 A number of local authority partners and other stakeholders expressed that they had respect for the skills and knowledge of children's support workers and the work they did. A head teacher said that children's support workers are 'totally experienced in their own field'. A local authority partner mentioned that in this area only Women's Aid and Barnardo's are working with children experiencing domestic abuse.

### **Summary and Recommendation: Skills, qualifications and experience**

<i>Summary</i>	The post of children's support worker covers a wide age range and broad spectrum of tasks, from providing practical support to intensive support to traumatised young people. There is no single job description for the post. Staff have a range of skills, experience and qualifications. Many have formal qualifications and some have degrees
<i>Recommendation</i>	See recommendation 12

### **Recruitment and retention of staff**

6.23 While most of the projects report no problems recruiting staff, a few reported some problems:

*'It can be a problem actually. In the past it has been a problem because what is problematic is you get people applying who have got a lot of experience working with children and young people but coming from a feminist perspective and understanding domestic abuse can be difficult' (children's worker).*

6.24 One service told us they got a lot of unsuitable applications because they did not ask for a high standard of formal qualifications:

*'...sort of generic childcare experience isn't always enough really... Like just working in a nursery for two years isn't going to qualify you to work with vulnerable children' (children's worker).*

6.25 Finding staff with relevant language skills can be a problem in relation to work with families from different backgrounds.

6.26 Some problems were reported with the retention of staff, with insecurity of funding and the fixed term nature of posts cited as the reasons. This could lead to high turnover of staff and issues for service planning:

*'So we're finding it difficult because for me I'm thinking about if funding for my post isn't continued then how will I explain this to children and families and it's not like you just don't turn up the next week ... you need to make them aware of that and come up with an exit strategy and something to transition them out of this.....and they're feeling like they've been just left' (children's worker).*

*'I think the other thing about not having longer term funding is that it prevents you from even .....doing the support plans for children you can't long term plan it; it also prevents the workers as a group of workers thinking long term.....you can't plan long term things like developing the service, getting money for a room and setting up premises and just your energy going into developing and building that service; you're constantly going from six months to a year' (children's worker).*

6.27 There were also comments about how the funding process itself meant that workers were unable to spend as much time with children and young people:

*' ....every year at a certain time we have to start looking at the funding and writing applications and looking at who we can get money from which pulls us away from the direct work with children' (children's worker).*

### **Summary and Recommendation: Recruitment and retention of staff**

<i>Summary</i>	Few problems were reported in relation to recruitment of staff to children's support workers posts. However, some problems with staff retention were reported. In some cases there was a high turnover of staff, bringing issues for service planning and in a few cases this has impinged on work with families. It is likely that uncertainty of funding, and the short term, fixed term nature of many of these posts has contributed to this.
<i>Recommendation</i>	See Recommendation 1

### **Access to training**

6.28 All children's workers do induction training in child protection, the effects of domestic abuse and health and safety. This induction appears to be very thorough and workers felt it was very useful.



6.29 Children's workers also seem able to access a wide range of training opportunities while in post. Project staff reported accessing 24 different kinds of courses ranging from infection control and health issues, to child protection training, courses on trauma and loss, through masters and other postgraduate courses. Many of the courses were one or two day courses, internal to Women's Aid, provided free by local authorities, or external organisations. The following training was mentioned:

- Children In Scotland training including a 3 day trauma course
- 12 week distance learning Tribal training in relation to infection control
- SVQ3 in childcare, learning and development
- "Seasons for Growth" training which is about working with young people and helping them to cope with change and loss
- 'No time to Grow' training
- Masters and post graduate courses
- Scottish Women's Aid training
- Survivor Scotland training
- Dealing with challenging behaviour
- Play Therapy
- Helping children cope with bereavement and loss
- Local authority child protection training
- Refresher child protection training
- Multi agency training
- Training by Adolescent and young people psychiatry services
- GIRFEC training
- Children with behavioural problems
- Drug and alcohol training
- Training to become a person centred counsellor
- Counselling skills
- Mental health training
- Self harm awareness
- Cultural awareness training
- Housing training.

6.30 Local authority partners were aware that children's support workers had completed local authority child protection training, generally by being included in the local authority training.

#### **Summary and Recommendation: Staff training**

<i>Summary</i>	<p>The induction process provided by Women's Aid for children's support workers seems thorough.</p> <p>Children's support workers are also able to access an ongoing range of internally and externally provided training opportunities. Most of these are short often one day courses. The type of course attended varies between projects.</p>
<i>Recommendation 22</i>	<p>Staff in Women's Aid children's services may benefit from a more strategic approach to training and practice development.</p>

## Protecting Children Framework for Standards and other relevant policies

6.31 Services reported that they take account of the Protecting Children Framework for Standards:

*'Well, we actually all have a copy of it. Every children's worker is provided with a copy of it and the Care Commission's actually asked us that .....you know it's something we discuss regularly at our sub-group meetings' (children's worker).*

6.32 Some workers attend child protection sub-groups or are on the Child Protection Committees. Given the nature of their involvement in the lives of families, the issue of child protection is a priority concern and staff are aware of the complexities of working with this. A number of children's workers have had to make child protection referrals. They said this can be difficult, and that it can impact negatively on relationships with mothers.

### Practice examples:

In some services mothers are asked to sign a child protection disclaimer which helps clarify the process:

*'... we are clear about that because we put the disclaimer, the child protection disclaimer in place first. So when women come into refuge we say, you know, confidentiality is very, very high. However, if there's a child protection issue you have to report it. So the woman has signed saying they've read that document and they understand it. And all through their support, you know, it's often mentioned throughout. So it seems fairer' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

One service told us they had devised a child friendly child protection policy for children and came up with a contract for them too. They told us this was particularly important in relation to outreach cases where they were working with young people whose parents did not know they were getting a service.

6.33 Services reported that policies and procedures were in place and children's workers appeared to be aware of them. Child protection policy, confidentiality, and policies around health and safety were all mentioned. Ensuring staff are aware of relevant policies and procedures appears to be an important part of the induction process; children's workers are given copies of the most important policies and procedures when they arrive in post. Scottish Women's Aid send services new policies and procedures on a regular basis; new policies and procedures or updates are discussed at team meetings to ensure all staff are aware of them:

*'We all have a copy of all of them. We go through them as a collective. New workers are introduced to them through induction. If there are new policies they will be discussed at meetings, it's done as a group' (children's worker).*

One service told us they were also signed up to local authority protocols and counselling protocols since their service was geared towards a therapeutic way of working.

## Summary and Recommendation: Child Protection Framework for Standards

Summary	Services reported that they take account of the Protecting Children Framework for Standards. There is representation on child protection sub-groups and on Child Protection Committees. Given the nature of their involvement in the lives of families, the issue of child protection is a priority concern and staff were aware of the complexities of working with this. There is awareness of other relevant policies and procedures
Recommendation	No action.

### Information sharing

6.34 This section addresses the issue of the way information sharing is handled in relation to children: within the organisation; with external organisations; between children and their mothers; and between children and workers. In the context of the Getting it right for every child proposals (GIRFEC), the Fund and the emphasis on partnership working, the issue of sharing information is a live issue for debate for projects and external partners.

#### *Sharing information with partner organisations*

6.35 Given the nature of the service, the issue of safety for women and children is always a priority for Women's Aid. Staff are always concerned that workers in other organisations understand the importance of confidentiality in the context of domestic abuse. Services reported that they mainly adhered to Scottish Women's Aid's policy on information sharing:

*'Obviously if any agency phones us we would ask them what they want to know, why they want to know it and what they intend to do with the information before we do hand it over. A lot of agencies that we are involved with, we've obviously got a good relationship with them anyway so you know a lot of consideration is given before any information is given out and of course there's the whole confidentiality thing as well which the women have said before you know there's a lot of trust put into our service and a lot of women have left and said you know the trust is 100% so you kind of respect that as a rule ... and if it's something outside to our policy or procedures we would just say to them unfortunately we can't share that information with you' (children's worker).*

6.36 There seems to be general agreement that information is only shared if there is a child protection concern:

*'I think we would be quite clear on that that if it was child protection then we would share information and otherwise we would speak to the child and the mum and if they didn't want us to talk then we wouldn't' (children's worker).*

6.37 Most Women's Aid respondents reported few concerns around the issue of information sharing, although a few problems were highlighted. One children's worker told us that new policies around information sharing which were being adopted by the local authority were proving challenging:

*'We're struggling with the way the Pathfinders<sup>8</sup> operate. Where does the information go? We need to ensure addresses are protected. Fathers have rights to information at children's hearings and other places. Workers are identified as well and can face intimidation from a woman's partner' (children's worker).*

6.38 Local authority partners and other organisations also felt that on the whole information sharing between them and Women's Aid in relation to children was unproblematic. Some participants said Women's Aid staff do share information on a need to know basis but that did not create difficulties. A head teacher said Women's Aid staff do share enough information; that they are clear when it is a child protection concern that needs to be shared.

6.39 One local authority partner mentioned that while information sharing was generally good; workers share information on a day to day basis, there are clear boundaries in relation to child protection about what is acceptable to share and what is not, issues could arise. It could also be problematic – he mentioned that Women's Aid operate strict confidentiality policies and sometimes this is not always helpful; sometimes there is a barrier which does not need to be there.

6.40 There were examples from both Women's Aid respondents and local authority and other partners where there seemed to be a lack of understanding of each others concerns around information sharing. There were also examples where trust had been built over time and this was working well.

6.41 Interviews with local authority partners suggested that prior to the Fund, joint working between Women's Aid and social workers in relation to child protection cases was rare. This was changing and there are examples of co-working with looked after children or with some children on the child protection register. Generally, there were no information sharing protocols in place. Local authority partners reported some partnership agreements and service level agreements.

### ***Information sharing between mothers and children***

6.42 Women's Aid groups take different approaches to parental consent and sharing information with mothers. For example, for some groups, children and young people can access outreach support without parental consent, others require this. Children's workers identified issues to be considered in relation to sharing information between children, children's support workers and mothers:

*'I guess one of the other challenges is mum's really, even though I explain that I'm a children's worker and I'm here for your child and there is a woman's worker who's here for you, some of the mums really want to know, obviously I can understand it if I was a mum, they really want to know "oh what did you say in the session today" or "what did she say in the session today" like "what happened, what's been going on" .....it's trying to strike a balance and make sure that you don't want to upset mum or make mum think that there's something odd going on ... I just keep it general when I drop them off but they do have a right to know what's been going on so I say "oh today we did stuff about self esteem and then we just played" or "today we talked*

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<sup>8</sup> See page 5 for an explanation of the Pathfinder Projects

*about important people in their life and then we played a little bit more” so the child can hear what I’ve said’ (children’s worker).*

6.43 In addition to trying to protect children and young people’s right to confidentiality one children’s worker raised a separate issue in relation to compromising a mum’s confidentiality. She said that children sometimes told her things about their mums and it could sometimes be difficult deciding whether to not to pass on information.

6.44 Some children’s workers reported they thought it was useful to share some information in certain circumstances but they always asked for the young person’s agreement to do this. Young people were confident that what they told their children’s worker would remain confidential. Indeed this was one of the things they reported that they liked most about support from Women’s Aid:

*‘ [name of children’s worker] was someone I could talk to, She was like somebody who I could trust. I know that she doesn’t let out anything without my permission. Not tell anyone without my permission’ (young person).*

6.45 One young person appeared to have a very good understanding of the situation regarding information sharing with mums:

*‘She has to get permission from my mum before she sees me. Or she’s not allowed to see me because that would be a bit like talking to strangers. Some woman you didn’t know was coming to see your daughter, and your mum not knowing about it. My mum filled out the consent form and she sent it away and then she phoned to see if it was definitely okay and suitable’ (young person).*

6.46 This girl’s mum was also clear about confidentiality. Mothers appeared to understand the issue of confidentiality in relation to their child and mainly appreciated that their children could confide in another adult if they felt unable to confide in them. They understood that their children needed someone to talk to:

*‘... if he wants to say ‘oh mum was terrible last night, she was really shouting at us that it’s bedtime’ or whatever. If he wants to be able to say that then, you know, I think he should be able to say that without me saying ‘what did you say to [the children’s worker], what did you say to [her]?’... and I know that if they were saying anything negative about me, to [her] that she would find a way of talking to me about it that would support me, that she wouldn’t be judgemental or, you know, she’s not, I don’t feel that she’s trying to get them to trip me up. You know, I don’t feel that she’s sort of saying ‘so what’s your mother done’ (mum).*

6.47 Some children’s workers explain the nature of the work they do with young people to their mothers but do this without breaching a child or young person’s confidentiality in any way. This seems to work well.

6.48 Issues around confidentiality and information sharing could be discussed with colleagues or managers. Children’s sub group meetings were one place where these kinds of issues would be discussed. Some services mentioned they might ‘run things by’ people in the local authority without giving names’ and this could work well.

### **Summary and Recommendation: Information sharing**

<i>Summary</i>	<p>Women's Aid projects seem clear about when they need to share information about child protection. Generally Women's Aid staff and local authority and other partners reported few concerns with information sharing.</p> <p>The safety of women and children is a priority concern for Women's Aid staff. There are concerns about sharing information with staff in other organisations who may not appreciate the importance of confidentiality in the context of domestic abuse. There are examples where trust had been built over time between staff in organisations; other examples where this had not yet happened.</p>
<i>Recommendation 23</i>	<p>Women's Aid and partners should continue to work together to build trust and understanding in relation to information sharing concerns about the safety of women and children living with and experiencing domestic abuse.</p>

## **AIM 4:- INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO INFORM SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATE IN ONGOING EVALUATION**

### **7. AIM 4:- OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO INFORM SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATE IN ONGOING EVALUATION**

#### **Introduction**

7.1 Findings for this section of the report relate to the fourth of the stated aims of having increased opportunities for young people to inform service development and participate in ongoing evaluation, with specific objectives of seeking children and young people's feedback, involving children and young people in development of services.

7.2 Evidence for this was collated from service effectiveness interviews, case study interviews with children's support workers, mothers and young people, and the children's questionnaire, stakeholder interviews with mothers and children's support workers.

#### **Working in participative ways**

7.3 The aims of the Fund included seeking feedback and involving children and young people in decisions that affect them, the support they receive, the service as a whole. Overall, projects reported operating in such a way as to involve young people actively in decisions about all aspects of the service; assessment, support and activities, review, information sharing, inter-agency contact and in relation to service development in general.

7.4 Almost all groups reported that given the nature of the service, it was mainstream practice to involve young people in discussion about the service and support they received. Some mentioned that as the service was voluntary, young people made a decision about whether or not to participate and were involved at all stages of the service they received and the service as a whole.

7.5 There was evidence that projects made use of a range of toolkits and techniques for working with, involving and consulting children and young people.

#### **Involvement in decisions about the individual service they receive**

7.6 Respondents informed us that the principles of children and young people being listened to, understood and respected were the underpinning aims of the service:

*'This is the whole ethos of the organisation, this is how we work from induction right the way through. It was done by word of mouth but now it's set down' (children's worker).*

7.7 Services explained that children and young people are involved in decisions about the support they receive on a regular basis; where they were young it is more difficult to involve them, and mothers are involved instead:

*'... what I do is when it comes to group activities that they want to do, I actually make sure that the kids tell me what it is they like, their likes or dislikes, their interests, hobbies; again all that's recorded in their support plans as well; I'll have monthly meetings with the kids to say you know 'what did you think of last month's activities? Is there anything that you didn't enjoy doing? Is there anything that you'd like to do?' So in that sense you know they are always encouraged to make their own decisions as well' (children's worker).*

7.8 The case studies provided evidence that children and young people are involved in decisions about the service they receive. One children's worker explained that every week she asks the children how the session went and whether there is anything they would like to change:

*'All our work every week, or every session that we do a wee evaluation sheet, did you enjoy this session, did you like the room today, did you like the snack today, did you like the activity today, if not is there anything else, did you feel that you have learnt anything, do you think there is anything you would like to change, or would you like to discuss anything next week, would you like... what would you like to do next week. So the children always have their choice, and they have got their say as well, whether they like that, or they don't like that' (children's worker).*

7.9 Young people and their mums confirmed that young people are involved in decisions about the service they receive. One mum told us:

*'... she'll say to me 'oh the boys have said they would really like to make pizzas next time or...' you know, so I think, you know, they do, they do say what they want to do. And...and I think she's taken them on a couple of trips that, you know, [name of son] said that he'd really like to go to the safari park. So they went, you know, that was one of the trips. So I think, and that's nice for them to know that what they are saying makes, you know, actually does change things a bit' (mum).*

7.10 One young person reported that one thing she particularly liked about the support from the children's worker was that she is in control and was not forced to speak about anything that she does not want to:

*'See sometimes if somebody's trying to say 'right come on, come on, come on' I'm mair determined that I'm not going to say nothing ... but she'll stop and say 'How's other things been?' So I'm not being pushed ... I'm in control' (young person).*

## **Opportunities to ensure young people inform service development**

7.11 Most projects reported that they obtained informal verbal feedback from young people on a regular basis, and more formal feedback through the use of monitoring and evaluation forms on a less regular basis. Children and young people having many opportunities to influence service development and participate in ongoing evaluation:

*'...any kids in this refuge they would quite honestly tell you they're really involved in a lot of decision making. You know, they've got a lot of choices made – they're not*



*told what to do – their not told you know this is what's happening – like go into the playroom today – you know you are having to do this, you know; they quite freely get to make their own choices' (children's worker).*

7.12 Mechanisms to gather the views of young people included the use of a box in the refuge where children and adults can post suggestions anonymously - but it was reported that this was not well used; another reported they had an evaluation wall in the play room.

7.13 Procedures for enabling young people to inform the service they received had become more formalised in recent years as services had become increasingly subject to external monitoring and evaluation, however:

*'I think the thing about the monitoring and evaluation forms and stuff it's almost kind of forced us just to have to do those things; we always did it anyway but it's like 'oh we really do actually need to do this in a formal way' so it has perhaps encouraged us to do that bit more and increase that because obviously it's required' (children's worker).*

7.14 In terms of involving children and young people in the development of the service they receive, one children's support worker explained that:

*'It's about building a relationship with the child, you know, where they're confident enough and it's about not sharing information that doesn't need to be shared and because for me that is integral to make sure that children are listened to and respected ... It's about listening to what they've got to say, valuing what they're saying but doing it in a way where you're not overpowering them and it's talking to kids at their level because everybody's at a different level so if you talk to somebody who is ten, you know, and you are talking to them like you would a seven year old then obviously there's a barrier there isn't there straight away so it's about making sure they are involved in the whole process of what they are needing out of the service rather than you saying well actually I think I'll lead it' (children's worker).*

7.15 The case studies confirmed that children and young people are involved in decisions about the service they receive. Mums agreed that their children were able to influence the service. In addition some mums told us they could influence the service themselves:

*'I could say at any time I dinnae agree wi that, I want to try this and that would happen. Like, at the moment, on a Friday we were takin the kids to the soft play area but we found that that didnae benefit [child's] behaviour cos he got hisel too highly strung and then he was a total nightmare to try and get oot of the soft play area and he just ran riot and his behaviour deteriorates rapid. And I spoke to [the children's worker] about it cos it was too much for me. I just couldnae cope wi that at the moment. So what we're dain is like other day oots to other places that we ken that the situations gonnnae be awright, and we'll build up tae the soft play area' (mum).*

7.16 Most mums reported that their children had been asked to fill in feedback forms and were keen to stress that this feedback would be taken on board but most said they had not been asked to give feedback themselves on the service their children received:

*'I think there is the wee sort of form at the end of the school holidays, when they have done wee projects, its just like a wee tick box sheet, and they have four or five*

*questions, they have to do that. I think its like a wee survey to see if the project was successful, would it be worth doing it again or having a follow up' (mum).*

7.17 There were few examples given of children and young people inputting into decisions about service development more generally.

7.18 Most stakeholders interviewed felt that children were at the centre of the service and that listening to and respecting young people's views was an important part of the support they received. Teachers confirmed that children were asked to evaluate the work in schools afterwards. Local authority partners were aware that children were involved in the evaluation of the service. However, in only one case were children involved in the recruitment process for new children's workers. Women's Aid confirmed they did not consistently involve children in the recruitment process. A local authority children's services planner reported that the service was excellent at encouraging children to have a voice about what happens and where they go. Local authority partners were aware children's support workers worked in 'child-friendly' ways and gathered written and verbal feedback in an ongoing way from the young people they were supporting. They were able to provide examples of how the service had been altered as a result of feedback from children, for example, increased flexibility in the times children could see their children's worker.

### **Practice examples:**

Young people are sometimes involved in making resources within some services - young people had been involved in making DVDs about domestic abuse; designing a welcome pack for young people coming into the service; and designing leaflets to advertise a service after teenagers provided very negative feedback on the existing leaflets.

Only one service reported that they involve children and young people in recruitment processes. They had used a pack produced by Save the Children, The Recruitment Pack (2005) which they felt was excellent.

One service had provided a new e-mail service following feedback from children:

*'And the children can contact us and we also have a email address, hear me, for children, it was discovered, you know, it was actually one of the other workers had been talking to a wee girl and she'd said that she had, during the night if she doesn't sleep and she worries about things, you know, she is up and down, up and down. And we suggested, she brought it to the group and said 'why don't we have an email address so the young person can get up during the night, put their thoughts into that, email it to me and then they might get back to sleep'. So we've started that. So we've got about three children I think that actually operate that just now that are doing that ... And then we'll get back to them in the morning and see how things are' (children's worker).*

Another service had got guinea pigs after children had been upset about not being able to bring their pets into refuge:

*'We have actually got guinea pigs as well, that's one big area that comes up for the children coming into refuge because they can't bring their pets with them ... So we have got the two guinea pigs and they help to look after them and that does seem to work really well ... It also teaches them how to look after things as well' (children's worker).*

### **Barriers to involving children and young people in decision making**

7.19 Staff reported a few pitfalls to gathering reliable feedback from children to aid service development. Notes of caution were expressed about legal constraints, of asking children to participate in too many evaluations and the difficulties of obtaining critical feedback.

7.20 In relation to legal constraints, respondents were concerned that there may be limits to how far children's workers can involve children and young people in decision making. For example, some children's workers talked about how difficult it is telling children and young people they can be involved in decision making when the legal system does not always enable their decisions to be taken into account, for example, in relation to contact with fathers:

*'I think the legal system doesn't really protect children well in Scotland so you can't really say 'Well now you've said you don't want to see your Dad you definitely won't'.... It's really difficult because you feel like they see you as someone who can help them and represent their view when actually you can only do it to an extent and like I feel that contact in the way the court system works is a huge, huge issue and obviously we don't have any power over that so I think that's the difficult thing and the same with sort of the Children Scotland Act and how it protects children you know sort of a child could disclose to you like that they've been physically abused but then in an investigation there might not be enough evidence and everything and*

*they've brought all that up to you but then still you've not be able to really do anything to help' (children's worker).*

7.21 In relation to asking children to participate in too many evaluations:

*'... there is always room for improvement in everything that you do, but sometimes you don't want to bog the child down too much, because they get fed up with doing evaluation sheets, and telling me how they feel all the time ... normally by the time that they have moved on, they have made so many other friends, that they really don't want to spend any time with you, never mind filling up more forms or sheets' (children's worker).*

7.22 In one service participants warned there was a danger that all the new reporting arrangements could actually result in decreased opportunities for young people to inform service development:

*'It's more difficult with the care commission and everything, it's how you balance this. So much effort goes into meeting the regulations. Young people are supposed to lead the service but with all the new regulations from the care commission and everywhere else it means that meeting the regulations leads the service rather than children and young people leading it' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

7.23 In relation to being able to obtain real critical feedback from young people, there were comments that feedback could be too positive; that it was difficult to get people to provide constructive feedback and to make suggestions as to how the service could actually be improved:

*'... we've just done our first proper evaluation but one of the problems we get is everybody says how good we are; we don't always get ... and we don't believe that...because you can't be perfect. I don't believe we're perfect. I think there is room for improvement but it is really hard to get people to say that. I don't know whether they're too scared; even though it's anonymised and we give them envelopes to post it back in; that doesn't work either; so evaluation's been a real bugbear for us really to know how to do it better...' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

**Summary and Recommendation: Opportunities for children and young people to inform the service they receive and ongoing service development**

<i>Summary</i>	<p>Information suggests that throughout children's services at Women's Aid the principle that children and young people are listened to, understood and respected underpin the provision of the service.</p> <p>There were numerous examples provided of services being children led; with opportunities available to children and young people to influence the service they receive.</p> <p>Procedures for enabling young people to inform service development have become more formalised in recent years as services have become increasingly subject to external monitoring and evaluation. This has been largely positive.</p> <p>Staff report some barriers to young people's positive participation in relation to legal constraints, asking children to participate in too many evaluations and difficulties in obtaining critical feedback.</p>
<i>Recommendation 24</i>	<p>There were many positive examples of children and young people being able to influence the service they received. Developments in this direction should continue.</p>
<i>Recommendation 25</i>	<p>Barriers to young people's positive participation including, legal constraints, children being asked to participate in too many evaluations and difficulties in obtaining genuinely critical feedback should be kept under review by all partners.</p>

## **AIM 5:- EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS TO ENSURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVE THE SERVICES THEY NEED WHEN THEY NEED THEM**

### **8. AIM 5:- PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS TO ENSURE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE RECEIVE THE SERVICES THEY NEED WHEN THEY NEED THEM**

#### **Introduction**

8.1 Findings for this section of the report relate to the fifth of the stated aims of having effective partnership working, with the specific objectives of developing good working relationships with relevant agencies including information sharing protocols and advocating for children and young people in local planning networks.

8.2 Evidence for this was collated from service effectiveness interviews, and stakeholder interviews with children's support workers, partner organisations, children's services planners.

8.3 Headline findings suggest evidence of partnership working with other organisations both at the level of individual practice and at strategic level. There was evidence of Fund resources being appropriately used to establish or further develop key relationships for partnership working and for the outreach service. There are numerous examples of Women's Aid staff and children's workers being aware of, and an integral part of, the local networks and forums that provide services to children and young people.

#### **Partnership working: strategic level**

8.4 Local authority partners reported that the Fund had been useful in linking domestic abuse into Children's Services Planning. This has played a part in giving a focus to multi-agency planning and driving the agenda on children and domestic abuse - it was one part of building a strategy to keep women and children safe.

8.5 Women's Aid groups had a place on the relevant local authority forums and planning networks, for example Domestic Abuse Forums; Community Safety Planning Partnerships, Voluntary Sector forums. In some instances they were already part of the groups and this could be built upon and developed. In other cases there had been fewer links with local authority networks and these were now being established. Local authority planners reported that Women's Aid workers were now an integral part of and relevant to the strategic groups. Women's Aid input at the forums was valued. It helped keep domestic abuse and the impact on children on the wider local authority agenda.

8.6 Women's Aid services also reported that they felt they had adequate representation on relevant multi agency forums:

*'Well we have a multi-agency forum here - I think the name's changing - but it's called the Domestic Abuse Multi-Agency Group at the moment and that has representatives from education, health, voluntary organisations, all of those groups at a strategic level so that's where a lot of the partnerships get formed and come down the line but the women here have also got excellent partnerships at a working level with people on the ground' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

8.7 One service told us they get together with other Women's Aid services in the area and the police and health for 'Big World'. This is an awareness raising day for all secondary schools in the area covering various issues, such as drug awareness, self harm and domestic abuse.

8.8 More critically, one children's worker mentioned that she had felt uncomfortable attending domestic abuse partnership meetings and that they were not always effective:

*'... and what happened was I was at one domestic abuse partnership meeting when I first started. And then there wasnae any for months. It seemed, people seemed to lose interest and it just didnae meet for a while. And at that one I really, I really felt, I don't know, I felt like I was in a cage and all those people were looking at me. It was a really uncomfortable experience. And [another children's worker] came wae me, as kind of like backup. Because it's part of our agreement we have tae attend these domestic abuse partnership meetings' (children's worker).*

### **Partnership working: individual practice**

8.9 In general Women's Aid staff, local authority and other stakeholders reported effective partnership and joint working around the needs of children and young people experiencing domestic abuse and that this has been beneficial for children's services within Women's Aid:

*'And looking at the other organisations, I think it's been really good to build up a knowledge of all the other services that are out there in [name of city] and be having our service complement theirs and just to make sure that the child and young person's getting access to everything' (children's worker).*

8.10 There was some evidence that partnership and joint working had both increased and improved, in part in response to new emphasis on this. Some staff felt that partner agencies had increasing respect for the work of Women's Aid:

*'They will phone up for advice if they need it, which I think is really good because before we were never recognised...but now it's the total opposite...they now actually realise 'okay this work is really important' ... I think they now realise we are worthwhile, and we are nae just little women!' (Women's Aid services co-ordinator).*

8.11 In some cases partnership working around the needs of an individual child was minimal. In other cases it was extensive. Social work, schools, integration teams (an education service), child psychology, the police, mental health services, health visitors, other voluntary organisations, youth services, drug and alcohol services, housing and restorative justice were identified as the main partner organisations for children's support workers.

8.12 Children's workers reported that they often make referrals to other agencies if they identify the child or young person has a particular need that would be better met by a different agency.

**Case example:**

A grandmother told us about a 'big meeting' at her granddaughter's school which was attended by the doctor, social worker, children's worker, herself and two people from the school. She said the children's workers sometimes initiates meetings at the school:

*'She was being bullied and things like that. So [the children's worker] said that she thought we needed to chat about [young person] and see what's going on. Also, she was frightened to go to school on Tuesday mornings because she had German and a lot of the time that she's been out of school was when her German class was. So her German teacher was not very pleased with her, and it upset [her], so she was frightened to go to school on a Tuesday. So we thought we'd get it all sorted out. That's what we're doing next week' (grandmother).*

8.13 In some areas partnership working seems particularly well developed. Several areas reported having local multi-agency screening groups for domestic abuse. One worker explained how it worked:

*'What happens is that out here there's a domestic abuse screening group, sort of multi-agency and that meets up once a fortnight so all the police referrals... are sent to us and they are sent to social work and the different agencies meet up at this screening group and they look at each case or each referral individually and if there is anybody that can offer any input, if they are social work or education or whoever, that can complete just a brief update on them you know or if they've got any involvement and they'll take it from there. Some are referred to us. Some of them are one-off incidents as you can imagine. Some of them are frequent and you know they are coming up sort of every month so if we get them referred to us through that we'll try and contact them cold' (children's worker).*

8.14 Several mentioned the importance of knowing what partner organisations were doing to avoid duplication of service:

*'One of the problems that I have is having a map - and this is something we are planning on doing because I raised it with the domestic abuse multi-agency partnership - is having a map of who does what to stop duplication because there are so many services, people are really confused about who does what; not just in the voluntary sector but in the statutory sector as well. It's really hard to know kind of what happens in what area and which partnerships you should be feeding into' (Women's Aid service co-ordinator).*

8.15 Sometimes children's workers commented that they had reduced or withdrawn support if a young person was receiving support from another agency. For example in one case support had ceased because the young person now had a youth worker.



**Practice example:**

One service told us they have an inter-agency support form in the child's support plan to ensure agencies work together to avoid duplication. This enables children's workers to consider partnership working when they first start working with a child. Because they have to record all inter agency contacts, information sharing etc it also means that they continue to work with other agencies throughout:

*'And part of our support plans we have for young people, you know, when we meet them we have an agency sheet. And the agency sheet is, you know, who else, do you see anyone else. And we would write that down and then we would contact them and say, you know, 'what work are you doing'. Just so there's no duplication in work' (children's worker).*

8.16 Services reported they had good relationships with other voluntary sector agencies but relationships with education varied. Some services reported that they had really good relationships with schools:

*'Certainly from outreach's point of view, with local schools and education it's been really quite positive. As I said earlier probably more positive than I'd anticipated because I'd anticipated lots of problems and lots of barriers which haven't actually been there. They've been really open and keen to work with us. And I know that not all areas have found that certainly. When we go to some training days at Scottish Women's Aid and speak to other workers, they'll say oh schools have been terrible' (outreach worker).*

8.17 Mothers and young people also provided evidence of effective working relationships with school; in particular of children's workers effectively advocating for young people. There were a few examples provided by mothers where this had been less effective.

**Case example 1:**

In this case the children's worker had very good working relationships with the young person's school. Support had ceased several months previously but the school contacted the children's support worker to let her know the young person was not attending. The child was re-referred back into the service. The support worker visited the young person to speak to him about this, then spoke to the school. Between them they worked out that the young person would attend for five hours a week. The young person's mum confirmed that the children's worker had worked with the school.

**Case example 2:**

The young person had moved to the area from an island and was very nervous about starting at a new school. The children's worker took her to school on her first day to reassure her. She saw the young person once a week for the first month she was at school to settle her in, had regular contact with her guidance teacher and said the guidance teacher, would phone her if anything came up. The young person said her children's worker had helped her adjust to a traumatic move and settle into a new life, helped give her confidence to make new friends and settle into a new school. Her mother confirmed how useful this support had been:

*'[young person] went through an awful lot when she started the secondary school, she was getting bullied and things like that, so [the children's worker] was there for her you know, went up and helped as well as myself ... [she] just phones up the school and just says to them you know if she could come up and see them, and she just goes up to the school' (mum).*

The deputy head teacher also appreciated this.

**Case example 3:**

This children's worker had also worked with the young person's school:

*'[the young person] wasn't engaging with the school at all and they put her on a part time timetable. I got a call from school just a couple of weeks ago to say that [she] could no longer sit her standard grades, I asked whether there is anything you can do to help in that. And I went and spoke to mum and [young person] and I says they are offering to give you this access qualification, but its not an exam or that, but if you could do this the school is offering to help you one to one if you could do that, you are going to have that qualification to come out of school. Eventually she went into school, she met the teacher one to one, and she got that qualification. Now to me that's a great achievement, and writing that down on her notes and everything, that whole sense of achievement...' (children's worker).*

8.18 One worker commented that national policy had been responsible for improved relationships with education:

*'There was a real push over the last year or two about the emotional well being of children and how that's part of the ..... curriculum criteria thing as well so I think it makes the head teachers look quite good if they can say on the HMI report we've got a Women's Aid service providing support to children.....I think that kind of works in our favour' (children's worker).*

8.19 Sometimes the relationship with schools had been slow to develop; trust had taken longer to build. In one case access to schools had taken more than a year. One worker explained that schools could be anxious about what children may disclose and about whether or not teachers and schools would be geared up to cope.

8.20 Some services reported minor issues arising in work with social work. This was mainly around the issue of confidentiality (discussed previously); or contact arrangements with fathers; sometimes it was simply work pressure issues, for example, young people being worked with by children's support workers were sometimes a low priority within a social worker's case load:

*'One of the social workers that I work with I've had trouble getting her to .... I think she has a huge caseload and the children that I work with that are part of her caseload are quite low down on her priority so it's difficult ...' (children's worker).*

8.21 Some services explained that partnership work could be difficult if an organisation was coming from a totally different perspective from their own. One children's worker told us:

*'...if you find that you are at loggerheads with other professionals, it puts your own feeling of your professional ability in doubt sometimes and I think I'm not doing my job properly here' (children's worker).*

8.22 Contact was frequently identified as an issue which particularly tested children's workers relationships with other organisations:

*'The only thing I would say that relationships have been really strained and difficult have been through contact issues. So like for instance we had a woman in the refuge where the contact was being forced on the young person and there was a terrible*

*relationship with social workers and lawyers and people who were fighting the woman's corner and social workers saying oh this child deserves to see their dad and they don't.....again going back to the understanding of domestic abuse; I think a lot more training would help with that. So I think, with me, around contact issues is the only time really we would have problems' (children's worker).*

8.23 One children's worker raised issues in relation to the effectiveness of the GIRFEC model. This worker was the only worker for one girl with complex needs:

*'[It] is supposed to be about one person allocated as a key worker for the case. Which is fine in theory but that doesn't work in practice because, for example, with [name of a young person], as it currently stands, there are no other agencies believe it or not involved with her. So, do I become the lead worker getting paid 15 grand a year? I don't think so. Is it me that's supposed to organise everybody else to come and meet and do the minutes and do the sending out. It's all complicated' (children's worker).*

8.24 Local authority planners also identified domestic abuse screening groups as effective ways of identifying children experiencing domestic abuse. This seemed to be effecting an increase in numbers of young people identified as in need of support; they were now receiving support where previously there would have been 'no further action'.

8.25 Regular inter-agency meetings were seen by local authority planners as beneficial in developing relationships, raising awareness of the services and improving planning. This was also a key link to children's services planning in the local authority. Local authority partners mentioned the willingness of children's support workers to work with partner organisations, This had taken place in the context of domestic abuse being higher on the agenda and more of a political priority and this was seen as positive.

8.26 Local authority partners believed that the development of outreach services had been helpful in developing links with other professionals. One example of this was in schools where Women's Aid children's support workers were helping school staff to see situations from the young people's point of view. The children's services at Women's Aid were also a 'pathway' for young people to other specialist services, for example; mental health, rape crisis and victim support services.

8.27 While communication was improving local authority partners recognised there was much still to be done in relation to cross-agency working. While relations in some areas may be improving, for example, education and health, it was more difficult in other areas, such as criminal justice.

8.28 Services also deliver domestic abuse training to partner organisations and they attend multi agency training provided through the local authority. This cascading of expertise was seen as effective.

8.29 Most services reported that they have arrangements in place around information sharing with other organisations. These are mainly informal rather than formal:

*'We don't have protocols but we have understandings. I think we are developing protocols at the moment. Because they are not written partnerships, do you know*

*what I mean, they're not on a written basis; they're just like .. you know... we've got a really good link with the police at the moment because we've got a domestic abuse liaison officer but we haven't anything that's written and says you must bind by this protocol ...I know it sounds stupid, but I think informal works better than formal. I know formal maybe protects you a bit more but I think informal you get better results. Because it's not structured and it doesn't say you must do this and you must do that. I mean we've got an information sharing agreement with the domestic abuse service around confidentiality and all those kind of things but that's the only one we have got one with but the police and everybody else we don't. We don't have anything with them at all' (Women's Aid services co-ordinator).*

Despite the lack of formal protocols services reported surprisingly few major problems around information sharing.

## Summary and Recommendation 2: Partnership working

Summary	<p>In general, understanding was growing between Women's Aid and other organisations about issues of information sharing and confidentiality. In the main Women's Aid and partner organisations were exploring issues and finding ways forward.</p> <p><b>At strategic level</b>, there was evidence of Fund resources being appropriately used to establish or further develop the key relationships for partnership working. Local authority and other partners reported that the Fund had been useful in linking domestic abuse into Children's Services Planning, giving a focus to multi-agency planning and driving the agenda on children and domestic abuse.</p> <p>Local authority partners were aware that Women's Aid had a place on the relevant local authority forum and planning networks.</p> <p>While there were examples of Women's Aid staff being aware of and integral to relevant local networks and forums, some staff reported that as yet they did not feel comfortable on these groups.</p> <p>In some areas partnership working seems particularly well developed. Several areas reported having local multi-agency screening groups for domestic abuse and this seems to be effective in identifying young people who need a service.</p> <p>At <b>individual practice</b> level, there were examples of cases where partnership working was minimal. In other cases, it was more fully developed.</p> <p>Relationships with education varied. Some services reported good relationships with schools: others had taken time to develop trust.</p> <p>The developing outreach service seems key to continued positive developments in relation to this.</p> <p>Relationships with social work were in the main positive, minor issues have arisen, mainly around confidentiality, contact arrangements with fathers; sometimes work pressure issues.</p> <p>These issues seem to be being sensitively addressed and discussed.</p>
Recommendation 26	All partners should consider more formally reviewing partnership working in a year's time
Recommendation	See Recommendation 23

## **FINAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **9. FINAL SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Background**

9.1 This document reports findings from an evaluation of the Scottish Government Children's Services Women's Aid Fund. Set up in 2006, the Fund reflected the commitment of Government in Scotland to address the significant problem of domestic abuse; within this the recognition that the needs of children experiencing domestic abuse were not being met.

9.2 The Fund was ambitious. The then Scottish Executive invested £6m (£3m in year 1, £3m in year 2) to enable an increase in specialist workers offering direct support to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. It was intended that each Women's Aid Group in Scotland would be able to develop its children's service; to put in place 3 full-time workers offering support directly to children. It was to enhance Women's Aid traditional support to children in refuge; to increase its follow-on service to children when they moved on from refuge. Most challenging perhaps, and in response to increasing knowledge about the particular difficulties faced by children experiencing domestic abuse but who may still be living at home, the Fund was also to enable the development of an outreach service. In 4 areas funding was provided to Local Authorities to deliver services.

#### **Headline findings**

##### ***Achievements***

- All 43 projects set up under the scheme have made significant progress towards meeting all, or almost all, of the key aims of the scheme
- All projects achieved or nearly achieved the target of a minimum of three children's support workers in each Women's Aid group or local authority
- All projects enhanced support to children in refuge; to children leaving refuge and receiving follow-on support
- All projects were in the process of developing an outreach service to children experiencing domestic abuse but whose mothers were still living at home
- All projects enabled an increased number of children and young people to access a Women's Aid service
- The service children's support workers were offering was valued by children, their mothers and other professional stakeholders
- The service was available to a wider range of children
- Children's support workers were working in participative ways with children
- Partnership working between Women's Aid and other organisations was mainly positive – when issues arose, partners were working hard to understand each others perspectives and resolve them.

## **Challenges**

9.3 Some challenges to future expansion of the service were highlighted:

- The lack of a stable funding base to sustain current levels of service into the future
- The lack of suitable premises for group-work
- Difficulties for rural areas in delivering a full range of services
- In the context of rapid service expansion some infrastructure challenges were evident.

We discuss the above in more detail below and have set out a number of recommendations from our research findings. These may be of use to practitioners, policy makers and all those involved in shaping future services to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse.

## **Methods and ethical considerations**

9.4 The evaluation was extensive. It involved gathering information from all 43 projects set up under the Fund. A major part of the evaluation was 15 detailed case studies based in 10 sample projects and built around 15 individual children. Interviews were conducted with children and young people themselves, their mothers, key workers, siblings and a range of associated professionals. It provided detailed information about the working of the scheme from the perspective of children. Children's support workers were interviewed as part of the case studies and as key stakeholders. Service effectiveness interviews were conducted with Women's Aid service co-ordinators and collective staff. Views on the working of the scheme were sought from key professional stakeholders in partner organisations. Information from a large number of children receiving a service was gathered via the children's questionnaire; in all 258 children aged 8 – 16 responded.

9.5 Given that the research involved direct contact with children, young people and mothers, and mindful of their likely prior experience of domestic abuse, the research team gave careful consideration to ethical issues of: power, safety, confidentiality, child protection, privacy and consent.

9.6 Research access to Women's Aid groups was freely given. Of 10 sample projects initially chosen by the research team, all agreed to participate<sup>9</sup>; workers were helpful in facilitating access to children and young people for interview. This made the research task easier. Other stakeholders too gave freely of their time.

## **Findings**

### ***Aim 1***

9.7 Aim 1 of the scheme was to increase access by children and young people to Women's Aid services. Specific objectives were to increase the number of workers to the

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<sup>9</sup> One later pulled out for practical reasons and was easily replaced.

recommended level of 3 FTE in each project; to increase the number of dedicated hours each worker is able to spend with children and young people; to increase the flexibility and range of hours services are provided; to increase the number of children and young people accessing refuge, follow-on and outreach support.

9.8 The Fund enabled the reporting projects to meet or nearly meet the target of having three children's support workers in each Women's Aid group: one refuge, one refuge/follow-on, and one outreach worker. There was some evidence of projects using monies flexibly and innovatively to meet local need. Concern was expressed from a number of sources that continuing insecurity of funding could create problems in maintaining staffing levels in the future.

9.9 Progress was made towards meeting the aim of an increasing number of young people able to access a Women's Aid service, across all categories. In 2005/6 there were around 1223 young people receiving support in refuge. By 2006/7 this had risen to 1647; an increase of 424 young people receiving support. For young people receiving support in refuge and receiving follow-on support, there were 338 young people in 2005/6, rising to 854 in 2006/7; an increase of 516.

**Table 8: Children and young people receiving support across all categories**

<b>Children and young people</b>	<b>2005/6</b>	<b>2006/7</b>	<b>Increase</b>
Nos. receiving support in refuge (only)	1223	1647	424
Nos. receiving support refuge and follow-on (only)	338	854	516
Nos. receiving outreach service	Data poor	Data poor	Data poor
Total nos. receiving support (refuge, and refuge and follow-on)	1561	2501	940

9.10 Local authority partners and other stakeholders seem satisfied with service expansion. Reservations were raised about using numbers of young people worked with as an indicator of service quality and/or as a proxy for good outcomes for young people.

9.11 Reported data on numbers of young people accessing children's services at Women's Aid is sometimes difficult to obtain. Numbers of young people receiving service in refuge are accurately recorded. There are inconsistencies across projects developing new follow-on and outreach services in the way they record and count young people. Information from the projects suggests that the increase in the numbers of young people accessing an outreach service has been substantial.

9.12 The Fund also enabled progress to be made towards increasing the number of dedicated hours children's workers were able to spend with children and young people. This was the case across all categories of work. Within this, however, there was considerable local variation. It varied from project to project; in response to the levels of needs of individual children presenting for service; and in relation to different types of work. Across categories, staff working in refuge spend most time in direct contact with children. Again, Women's Aid staff, children and mothers, local authority partners and other stakeholders reported being satisfied with levels of support. A small number of children reported wanting to spend more time with children's support workers, this seemed to apply more to younger than older children, and to girls more than boys. There was some evidence of under-resourcing to support children at the highest level of need.

9.13 There was widespread agreement among stakeholders that children's services at Women's Aid were flexibly delivered, child centred and tailored to meet children's needs. There was evidence of out of hours and weekend contact at a level children wanted. Again, a minority of children reported they would have liked support workers around at times other than when they were. Out of hours contact with children seemed to be largely informally organised, largely initiated by families and mainly to involve contact over the phone to deal with particular problems or crises arising. Barriers to expansion of out of hours service were mentioned and included the need for suitable affordable premises and concerns about worker safety.

9.14 Projects reported effective mechanisms in place to identify and work with categories of 'hard to reach' children and young people. Definitions of 'hard to reach' groups differed across projects but often included; minority ethnic groups, children with disabilities, and children living in rural and island authorities. Some groups included children and young people experiencing domestic abuse but still living at home as a hard to reach group. Local authority partners and other stakeholders were aware of and appreciated progress made by projects in striving to reach hard to reach groups. Outreach work and awareness raising in schools was seen as a particularly effective way of accessing hard to reach young people.

9.15 At the point of evaluation, some projects were at early stages in developing their outreach service. Partner organisations, other stakeholders and services themselves reported that the outreach service was operating effectively. The service is expanding with rapidly increasing levels of referral. Models and type of service offered as part of the outreach service varied greatly from project to project. A specific role for the outreach service is not yet well defined.

9.16 Most Women's Aid services demonstrated effective promotion of their children's services. There were a few examples of professionals and service users being unaware of Women's Aid services for children. Awareness training for other professionals was mentioned as an effective way of raising awareness of the service. Information from mothers suggests the need for Women's Aid to promote a modern image of refuge accommodation.

9.17 While the Fund has made an impact on increasing the access young people have to Women's Aid services a number of potential barriers to the future continued development of Women's Aid children's services were identified. These included, staff shortages, lack of time, lack of premises or appropriate premises. There were particular challenges for island communities and young people living in rural areas. Young people's reluctance to access services was identified as an additional barrier.

## ***Aim 2***

9.18 Progress has been made towards meeting the second aim of the scheme to have an increased range of specialist services that meet the diverse needs of young people; also towards the specific objectives of providing one to one support; a group-work service; and to use a key worker approach. Projects were also asked to use holistic assessment, support plans and other tools, provide age appropriate, ability appropriate and diverse services, and opportunities for children to build social networks.



9.19 Information from across the study; from case study interviews with children and young people, and from questionnaire returns, highlighted the important role children's support workers played in the lives of children with contact with Women's Aid and provided information about the extent to which they are valued by children. Mothers value them too; they see them as an important service for their children.

9.20 Most children's support workers provide services to a wide age range of children (from 0 -16) and support children demonstrating a very wide spectrum of need. The role is wide, incorporating a variety of tasks and activities; ranging from providing practical help and support to mothers and organising child care, schooling and other services, through to providing intensive support for highly traumatised teenagers.

9.21 Some children's workers identified benefits to providing support to mothers on parenting and relationships alongside support to children; this may produce better outcomes for children. This needs to be weighed against the importance young people place on having a worker they identify as theirs who is separate from their mother.

9.22 In every service contacted, staff reported that all children and young people had access to a one to one service if they wanted one. Case study information confirms this. In questionnaire returns, more than 90% of children reported spending some time alone with their children support worker; this was valued.

9.23 The Fund also enabled an expansion of the group-work service to children within Women's Aid. In general this was working well and was appreciated by children and young people, and by their mothers. Partner organisations also valued the service. Some barriers to further expansion of the group-work service were identified. These included that the group-work service should be developed flexibly and according to need; it does not suit all children in all circumstances. There were a few examples of group-work not being offered for practical reasons, for example; in rural areas families are spread over wide areas; in one case it was curtailed because of a lack of appropriate facilities and premises. Where there is funding for transport, uptake is better; but this is not always available.

9.24 The key worker system seems to be working well. Children are allocated a key worker as soon as they come into the service. Children are aware they have a key worker or a worker for them. Where there needs to be a handover of worker this seems to be being handled carefully and well.

9.25 A wide range of age appropriate services are provided across all categories of service. The Fund has contributed to this being possible.

9.26 Staff are involved in an ongoing process of assessing the needs of and risks to children. The issue of safety is always high on the agenda. Tools and mechanisms for conducting assessments vary across projects; in most the process is relatively unstructured and informal.

9.27 Support plans are widely used by workers. Children are involved in developing them. There were a few children who did not know they had a support plan; some mothers did not know children had a support plan.

9.28 There were mixed views about the usefulness of the recording templates for the Scottish Government Fund. The main criticism was that they were very time consuming to complete and contained too much detail. Most however, felt that the new shorter version of the template had removed some duplication and was easier to complete. Some mentioned that they had been useful in enabling projects to reflect on their practice.

9.29 Staff viewed helping children to maintain and build social networks as an important part of their job. There are many examples of strenuous efforts being made to support young people in this. There are some examples of barriers illustrating how difficult it is to provide support in ways not stigmatising to young people. Rules about not being able to have friends in refuge are particularly difficult for children trying to maintain and build friendships. While school may be a convenient place to meet young people, care needs to be taken to ensure young people do not find it stigmatising; they may find it difficult to suggest alternative venues.

### ***Aim 3***

9.30 The third aim of the scheme was to ensure effective management and the delivery of practice standards. Specific objectives were to ensure services were registered and inspected by the Care Commission, to recruit workers with appropriate skills and knowledge, to ensure staff were trained in line with SSSC requirements and that they take account of the Protecting Children Framework for Standards.

9.31 The Fund has enabled the strengthening of operational management arrangements within Women's Aid. Services generally report adequate structures in place to manage and support staff working with vulnerable children and young people. This operates differently across projects and, is informally organised in some.

9.32 Children's support workers spend an appropriate balance of time on direct work with children and administration. Travel and time spent monitoring services and reporting, and time spent on funding applications were identified as barriers to time spent working with children.

9.33 The majority of projects funded under the scheme were registered or were seeking registration with the Care Commission. Most refuges are registered and inspected by the Care Commission but they tend to be registered as housing or as day care providers. Criteria for registration is complex and groups have received considerable support from Scottish Women's Aid to support registration. Different decisions about the form registration should take have been made.

9.34 With regard to the role of a children's support worker, we have already mentioned that the current remit is very broad; that staff work with a wide age-range and have a broad spectrum of tasks. There is no single job description for the post. Staff in post currently have a broad range of skills, experience and qualifications. Many have formal qualifications; some have degrees.

9.35 Few problems were reported in relation to recruitment of staff to children's support workers posts. However, some problems with staff retention were reported. In some cases

there was a high turnover of staff, bringing issues for service planning and in a few cases this has impinged on work with families. It is likely that uncertainty of funding, and the short term, fixed term nature of many of these posts has contributed to this.

9.36 With regard to staff development, the induction process provided by Women's Aid for children's support workers is thorough. Children's support workers are able to access an ongoing range of internally and externally provided training opportunities. The range of training available and accessed varies greatly across projects.

9.37 Services reported that they take account of the Protecting Children Framework for Standards. There is representation on child protection sub-groups and on Child Protection Committees. Given the nature of their involvement in the lives of families, the issue of child protection is a priority concern; staff were well aware of the complexities of working with this. There was also awareness of other relevant policies and procedures.

9.38 Women's Aid projects seem clear about when they need to share information about child protection. Generally Women's Aid staff and local authority and other partners reported few concerns with information sharing. The safety of women and children is a priority concern for Women's Aid staff. There are concerns about sharing information with staff in other organisations who may not appreciate the importance of confidentiality in the context of domestic abuse. There are examples where trust had been built over time between staff in organisations; there were other examples of where this had not yet happened.

#### ***Aim 4***

9.39 The fourth of the stated aims of the Fund was to increase opportunities for young people to inform service development and participate in ongoing evaluation. The specific objectives were to seek children and young people's feedback and involve them in the development of services.

9.40 Women's Aid children's services are underpinned by the principle of children and young people being listened to, understood and respected. There were numerous examples provided of opportunities available to children and young people to influence the service they receive. Procedures for enabling young people to inform service development have become more formalised in recent years as services have become increasingly subject to external monitoring and evaluation. This has been largely positive. Staff report some barriers to young people's positive participation in relation to legal constraints, asking children to participate in too many evaluations and difficulties in obtaining critical feedback.

#### ***Aim 5***

9.41 Aim 5 of the scheme was concerned with having effective partnership working. The specific objectives were to develop good working relationships with relevant agencies including having information sharing protocols and advocating for young people experiencing domestic abuse in local planning networks.

9.42 Partnership working at strategic level and at the level of individual practice in general is working well. **At strategic level**, there was evidence of Fund resources being appropriately used to establish or further develop key relationships for partnership working.

Local authority and other partners reported that the Fund had been useful in linking domestic abuse into Children's Services Planning, giving a focus to multi-agency planning and driving the agenda on children and domestic abuse. Local authority partners were aware that Women's Aid had a place on the relevant local authority forum and planning networks. There were examples of Women's Aid staff being aware of and integral to relevant local networks and forums. Some staff reported they did not yet feel comfortable on these groups. In some areas partnership working seems particularly well developed. Several areas reported having local multi-agency screening groups for domestic abuse and this seems to be effective in identifying young people who need a service.

9.43 At **individual practice** level, there were examples of cases where partnership working was minimal; in other cases it was extensive. Relationships with education varied. Some services reported that they had really good relationships with schools: others had taken time to develop trust. The developing outreach service seems key to continued positive developments in relation to this. While relationships with social work were in the main positive, minor issues have arisen, mainly around confidentiality, contact arrangements with fathers; sometimes work pressure issues. These issues seem to be being sensitively addressed and discussed.

### **Considerations for the future**

#### ***Aims 1 and 2:- Increase Access by Children and Young People to Women's Aid Services; Specialist Services to Meet the Diverse Needs of Young People***

1. Timely action is needed between Scottish Government, local authorities and Women's Aid groups to plan for continuation of the service at the end of the current funding period
2. Women's Aid Projects should gather consistent, accurate base-line data about numbers and throughput of young people receiving services; across all categories (in refuge and receiving follow-on and outreach support). It would be useful if this was held and collated nationally and information based on this fed back to projects
3. Women's Aid projects could consider introducing a more strategic approach to winding down and closing cases, to waiting lists, to allocating cases according to priority need
4. Women's Aid Projects should gather consistent and accurate base-line data about the number of hours children's support workers spend in direct contact with children and young people
5. Women's Aid projects should keep under review services to children with the greatest levels of need
6. Local authorities and Women's Aid groups may wish to consider addressing practical barriers which may make it difficult to further expand the group-work and outreach services; for example, difficulties of organising groups in rural areas; finding affordable, suitable premises to meet the different demands of new services
7. Women's Aid could consider setting up a national or centralised resource to meet out of hours and weekend demand for children's services; for example a helpline for children
8. Women's Aid projects should consider developing a more strategic approach to reaching hard to reach children and young people

9. Given the rapid expansion of the outreach service across Women's Aid, there may be benefit in taking stock of how this aspect of the service has developed. Greater clarity about the function and purpose of the outreach service and providing opportunities for practitioners to share positive practice experiences of the work may be useful
10. Women's Aid could give consideration to a campaign promoting a positive and modern image of refuges
11. New service development should take account of the extent to which children and young people value the service provided by children's support workers
12. There may be merit in reviewing the children's support worker post. Consideration could be given to splitting the post into distinct roles
13. Women's Aid children's support workers should continue to provide one to one support: this is valued by children
14. In providing a group-work service, Women's Aid projects should consider, where possible, ensuring they contain similar age children; that there are age appropriate activities for younger and older children; and for boys in particular
15. Women's Aid projects might consider adopting more formal processes for assessing risk to children
16. There may be merit in reviewing the use of support plans across Women's Aid groups. A more standard approach to case review processes should also be considered
17. Children's support workers should take care to ensure that meetings with children are in places where children feel comfortable and do not feel stigmatised, finding creative ways enable young people to maintain old friendships where possible and to build new social networks where this is needed
18. More formal support and supervision arrangements should be introduced in those Women's Aid projects where this is informally organised
19. Women's Aid projects may wish to consider streamlining and sharing administrative processes; including having specialist staff to negotiate budgets, deal with finance, be involved in business planning, and drive service development
20. Inconsistencies across Women's Aid children's services, where workers are doing similar jobs with different terms and conditions, should be addressed
21. Given the expansion of children's services within Women's Aid, it may be timely to review current terms of registration with the Care Commission
22. Staff in Women's Aid children's services may benefit from a more strategic approach to training and practice development
23. Women's Aid and partners should continue to work together to build trust and understanding in relation to information sharing concerns about the safety of women and children living with and experiencing domestic abuse
24. There were many positive examples of children and young people being able to influence the service they received. Developments in this direction should continue
25. Barriers to young people's positive participation including legal constraints, children being asked to participate in too many evaluations and difficulties in obtaining genuinely critical feedback should be kept under review by all partners
26. Consideration should be given to more formally reviewing partnership working in a year's time.

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## Appendix 1: Fund Objectives

**Table 9: Fund Objectives 1: Increased access by Children and Young People who have experienced domestic abuse to services provided by Women's Aid**

Indicator	Evidence
Staff at the recommended level or more( each Women's Aid Group had 3 fte equivalent children's workers 1 Refuge; 1 Refuge and follow-on; 1 Outreach)	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators
Increased number of dedicated hours workers spend with children and young people	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs
Increased flexibility of service provision (times best suited to needs of children and young people)	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs
Increased number of children and young people accessing refuge, follow-on and outreach	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators
Effective mechanisms in place to Increase number of hard to reach young people accessing service	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators
Effective outreach service	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators
Effective ways of raising awareness/publicising services	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators

**Table 10 Fund Objective 2: Increased range of specialist support services that meet the diverse needs of children and young people (Increased from 2005/6 to 2006/7)**

Indicator	Evidence
Increased provision of one to one services to children and young people	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs
Increased provision of group-work service to children and young people	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire

Indicator	Evidence
	Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs
All children and young people have a Key worker	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs
Increased provision of age appropriate services	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs
Increased provision of ability appropriate services	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs
Effective assessment of needs and risks	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interview with CSW
Effective use of support plans	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interview with CSW
Effective planning to meet needs	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interview with CSW
Increased opportunities for children to build support networks	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs

**Table 11: Fund Objective 3: Effective operational management, delivery of key processes, practice standards**

Indicator	Evidence
Services registered and inspected by the Care Commission	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators
Staff have appropriate skills and knowledge	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs
Appropriate staff training (in line with SSC requirements)	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs



<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Services take account of Protecting Children Framework for Standards	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs
Effective information sharing	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs and partner organisations
Effective case recording	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs Stakeholder interviews with CSWs
Relevant policies and procedures in place and staff aware of them	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs
Effective staff recruitment	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators
Effective retention of staff	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs
Effective mechanisms to effect development, change and improvement of service	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with children's services planners and partner organisations
Effective balance between direct work with children and young people, and administration (case recording, case reporting, administration, training, and fundraising)	Recording templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs

**Table Fund Objective 4: Increased opportunities for children and young people to inform service, service development and to participate in ongoing evaluation of service**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Children and young people are listened to, understood and respected	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs
Children and young people are involved in decisions about the services they receive (or mothers where children are very young)	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs
Children and young people are involved in decisions about service development	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Case study interviews with CSWs, mothers and

Indicators	Evidence
	CYP CYP questionnaire Stakeholder interviews with mothers and CSWs

**Table 12 Fund Objective 5: Effective partnership working with other organisations to ensure children and young people receive the services they need when they need them**

Indicator	Evidence
Effective working relationships with relevant organisations	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs, partner organisations, children's services planners
Information sharing protocols developed with relevant organisations	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs, partner organisations, children's services planners
Needs of children and young people promoted in other local planning fora.	Reporting templates Interviews with co-ordinators Stakeholder interviews with CSWs, partner organisations, children's services planners

**Table 13: Characteristics of the sample**

<b>Case ID</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Type o, he f case</b>	<b>Referred by</b>	<b>Length of contact with CSW</b>	<b>Involvement of other agencies</b>
1.	1	F	White Scottish	Refuge	Mum	2 months	None
2.	15	M	White Scottish	Outreach	Mum	3 years	CAMHS, youth work, voluntary sector, social work, school
3.	10	F	White Scottish	Follow on	Mum	3 years	Courts, school
4.	12	F	White Scottish	Outreach	School nurse	1.5 years	school, school nurse, social work, psychology
5.	10 & 13	M & F	Black African	Outreach	Mum	1.5 years	None
6.	14 & 15	2 F	White Scottish	Refuge	Mum	7 months	school, school counsellor, school nurse, social work, Voluntary sector, courts, voluntary sector, health
7.	7 & 5	M & F	White Scottish	Outreach	Social work	5 months	Social work, family support, police, school, court re contact, mental health
8.	7 & 5	2 M	White Scottish	Follow on	Mum	9 months	School, Social work
9.	11	F	White Scottish	Outreach	Gran	1.5 years	None
10.	10	M	White Scottish	Outreach	Mum	13 months (case now closed)	None
11.	6 & 3	M & F	Chinese	Follow on	Mum	11 months	Child counsellor, family support, school
12.	11	M	Asian	Outreach	Mum	14 months	Youth justice
13.	15	F	White Scottish	Follow on	Mum	8 months	School, home school support, social work
14.	11 & 7	M & F	White Scottish	Follow on	Mum	1 year (case now closed)	School, social work
15.	11	M	White Scottish	Refuge	Mum	9 months	School



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